

EXPANSE®



Number 3

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Poul Anderson

Forrest J Ackerman
P. Schuyler Miller
Sonia Orin Lyris
J. Brian Clarke
John Brunner
and more....



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Save A Tree

Anatolia has an arid climate. Seen from space, it looks like a sore – part of the same canker growing out from the North African continent. I even heard a noted historian speak of the region's far past, describing it as always having been this way.

But, you know, it hasn't.

Once upon a time, Anatolia had trees!

So what happened?

Well, to put it simply, the Roman empire needed wood. And their pogrom of deforestation changed the environment forever. I suppose they could have replanted seedlings and better managed their resources, but they didn't. It wasn't a major priority with them.

Today, whole industries are shut down because of a Snail Darter. Farmers are arrested and their possessions seized because they ran over a Kangaroo Rat. And people everywhere are embracing the "culture" of early hunter-gatherers (except, without the "hunter" part – that would be politically incorrect!)

Progress?

The environmentalist faith yields sovereignty to Mother Goddess. As though the natural world possessed *mind* and could regulate itself, by itself. According to this superstition, the least we do to the environment the better. Naturally then, they resist technology and progress.

Taken to an extreme, as we see in the world today, this becomes self-destructive. No longer are we moving forward. We've already conceded *the end*, and now occupy ourselves in the conservation of "dwindling resources".

But where in the natural world do you see "mind" at work? Only people have minds and the opportunity, through life, to learn to use them. Unless we've completely *lost* our minds, we realize that "Mother Goddess" is an inanimate *concept* – possessing neither intelligence nor creativity.

The material universe – the environment – exists only as a resource. We can use it, mold it, shape it, alter it as we wish. We have the power to save a species or make it extinct. It's our decision, alone. Only we have the power.

We have, in the past, abused the environment. That is, however, no reason to abandon our creative responsibilities in managing the environment for the present and the future. It takes time to learn how to do it right, that's no reason to return to the darkness of Stone Age ignorance.

There will be occasions when we decide that a Snail Darter is not as important as a Man. There will be other occasions when we plant a tree. And occasionally, we'll make a mistake.

The environment and all its creatures only have meaning in the context of our usage. Let's use them wisely!

So indeed, let's save a tree.

Preserve it as a book.

– Steven E. Fick

If your Subscription Solicitors were looking for a particular sub-section of the SF reading population, you have to give them full marks. They hit me dead-on with claims of "bringing you the best in *traditional* science fiction."

Your author list is full of the names I like and read. I would probably give *EXPANSE* a try just for Forrie Ackerman's pulp reprints. Your will be the first SF magazine subscription I've taken since H.L. Gold's *Galaxy* in the 1950's!

So, good luck to you all; keep us old SF fans in mind in your editorial policies. I have no objections to new authors as long as they don't try to ride another "new wave" into incoherence.

Gary M. Gordon
DeLeon Springs, FL

I particularly enjoyed James Van Hise's commentary on *Starship Troopers* for the very reason that I don't necessarily agree with his condemnation of Heinlein's views or Militaristic SF. But this type of essaying on authors, books and themes within the genre is something not found in most of the other short fiction magazines, and is a welcome addition to yours. I hope you continue this feature and invite response and debate as well.

Ron Cashman
Quincy, MA

It is our intention to do more of this type of commentary in the future. An upcoming issue will feature an unusual perspective on H.G. Wells and his work.

[The following letter was written on letterhead from a roofing company.]

Just a note to tell you how much I appreciated the job you did on my story in *EXPANSE* #2. As we say in the hills, you did me proud.

I experience a twang of fear whenever I sell a story. My first sale was a humorous yarn about a killer toilet bowl. The editor, as was his right, shortened it by removing all the laughs, making it a straight and very stupid horror tale.

Thanks for the good work! You'll be hearing from me.

In case you're wondering, I scavenge my stationery from print store dumpsters. The secret of the writing life is a low overhead.

ryck neube
Covington, KY

*The secret of success in publishing?
Paperclips.*

All those paperclips authors send us with their story submissions and never seem to get back... We sell them for scrap metal.

I am nearly finished reading the premiere issue. But before I can continue, I'm compelled to stop and order a subscription. This is great stuff! Only hard-core science fiction. I don't have to weed through the Princesses & Dragons to get to the true science fiction literature I want to read (vs. *Science Fiction* Age, whose very title is misleading). *EXPANSE*, so I see, covers the combination of science fact & imagination.

Truly Expansive!

Floyd B. Fairbanks III
Haverhill, MA

I discovered *EXPANSE Magazine* and was instantly taken with its format and content. It is unusual to find a magazine nowadays that prints only real science fiction. Although I enjoy science fantasy as well, I find that the line between science fiction and science fantasy, once so clearly defined, has become too blurred of late. Thank you for redefining it.

H. David Blalock
Memphis, TN

I enjoyed the commentary "Starship Troopers: Militarism in SF" by James Van Hise...

The handling of gratuitous, antihuman violence and general disregard for human life is a big problem in literature and films today and not just in SF. Heinlein was a naval officer, where, aside from the marines (in England part of the Navy), there is not usually direct contact with an enemy. The only man I have ever known to have killed men in cold blood was my grandfather, who was a machine-gunner in one of this country's greatest regiments — the DL (Durham Light Infantry) during WWI. That experience not only gave him a great respect for human life but made him fervently anti-war.

But the problem goes deeper than moralizing. There was recently a programme on our TV about serial killers. It included an interview with an American psychiatrist talking about why the United States has currently the largest per capita number (of serial killers). He thought the answer must lie in the glorification of gratuitous violence on TV and films and predicted a growth of the phenomena in Britain in the future. I fear he will be right although I recognize there is not a direct cause and effect at work here.

One problem is that violence is treated so unrealistically. People have ferocious fights, that would hospitalize them for weeks, and just walk away. Others walk through a hail of bullets and explosives and emerge unscathed and even manage to function fairly well when they are hit. Another point is that it fosters the belief that understanding and negotiation are a waste of time and that the world

is not a complex and often fragile place. It is all very simple — all you have to do is get out there and kick ass or kill something to solve the problem. This mindset feeds on itself for when violent children or criminals come up for discussion the same simplistic solution is offered — hit back! Kill 'em!

Violence can be dealt with properly. I feel that Jonathan Kellerman's books, for example, handle (what is quite often brutal) violence well. It is part of the plot and not unnecessary, voyeuristic or glorified. We have a long way to go against some powerful and entrenched interests, but putting humanity and violence in a proper perspective is the responsibility of both writers and readers.

*Martin Spellman
Middlesex, England*

I really don't think Heinlein was trying to glorify war or violence per se. The theme of the book seemed to be social responsibility. And, perhaps for effect, he exaggerated his examples.

There is occasion when violence is necessary. Consider Chamberlain. He tried to negotiate peaceably with Hitler before WWII. And had he been allowed to continue, no doubt today we'd all be stepping the goose.

Part of the problem is that we no longer believe that anyone can truly be classified as good or evil. And that blindness could become a fatal mistake. Certainly in America we see its effects in the promotion of crime and the total disregard for the victims of crime.

You might argue that capital punishment is no deterrent. Yet if a serial killer had been executed after his first murder, he would never have become a serial killer.

*E. G. Gannon
Boston, MA*

I think the hope and challenge for the future is to raise the level of public debate.

For thousands of years dichotomies have been the basis of Chinese philosophy — Quantum theory is a dichotomy. Yet in this enlightened era huge effort is wasted in the debate between the social expansionism of liberalism and social consolidation, i.e. conservatism.

The greatest ideological conflict in history was between society as a whole, i.e. socialism/communism and society as the sum of its parts, democracy.

Of course we think that democracy has won, yet it doesn't explain various social constructs such as tribalism, religion or pro-football. Nor does it explain phenomena such as the Chinese economy, Waco or party politics.

Even God doesn't stand up to scrutiny. To be total, it must be absolute, which is irreducible simplicity; and infinite, which is immeasurable complexity. If it is absolute, it could have no definition of

division, so if there is a spiritual structure to life, which there seems to be, it would not be mortal or even unique.

In fact I've come to the conclusion that reality is an illusion. Hubble really discovered the cosmological constant.

Matter is a product of vacuum fluctuations.

Why, may I ask, if the vacuum is so unstable as to allow this process in the first place, is it assumed to be stable enough for automatic resolution?

Space grows and collapses into the vortex of galaxies. Gravity is the anti-vacuum. Background radiation is smooth because it is vital at that level. The force of gravity and the rate of expansionism match because it is a causal relationship.

Time and space are not interchangeable as matter and energy are, they are opposites. At a universal instant time is objective and static. Space is infinite, time is absolute. I think the vacuum is the tension between the two.

Do you see why I might seek refuge in science fiction?

*John B. Merryman Jr.
Lutherville, MD*

This reminds me of a book I read once. On the cover were these enigmatic words: "Don't Panic."

Surprisingly enough, I liked the article on "Cosmic Music" the best. I've recently become a fan of *Enya* and Moira Brennan myself, and was glad to see their music classified as Neo-Celtic rather than the all-inclusive "New Age" category.

*J.W. Donnelly
El Paso, TX*

Thank you for the review copies of *EXPANSE*. Frankly, I don't normally "gush" when I write reviews. People who read my column appreciate that I call 'em as I see 'em, good or bad. I also don't usually write the publisher and tell them their magazine took my breath away. It's like this: *EXPANSE* is the best thing to hit my desk to date, period.

Enclosed is a pre-publication copy of the review, soon to appear in the *Small Press Genre Association's* magazine. I'm proud of you and the caliber of your publication. Keep up the good work! (I think you can have a good day now.)

*Panda England
Hastings, MI*

I honestly did not pay her to write this!

My cousin, Billy, was abducted once by aliens from another planet. They said Elvis was on Mars.

*name withheld
Little Rock, AR*

Hey great, read Peter Huston's piece on pg. 77 for a complete exposé of the phenomena.

EXPANSE® Magazine welcomes your letters. Whether to comment, criticize or just say hello, let's keep in touch. We'll publish as many as we have room for. Your input makes a difference as we continue to grow and improve in bringing you the best in science fiction! Unless otherwise marked, all letters are assumed for publication and become the property of EXPANSE® Magazine and its Publisher. Letters may be edited, as necessary, for space considerations. Send to: EXPANSE® Magazine, Post Office Box 43547, Baltimore, Maryland 21236-0547. And thanks in advance!

There were five mimes on the site — not a large troupe, but it was not to be a large house.

Randolph coaxed the cherry tip of a longfellow into life, adding flame to the parching air. The climb up the scrabbly hill from where his flitter was parked had left him sweaty and breathless. Desert dust dried his skin. Below, the drum of ground under the blue-bubble sky conveyed a sense of movement and freedom that made him dizzy. He drew on the 'fellow excitedly.

The mimes, black squiggles in the heat haze, limbered up with stretching exercises. Randolph ducked under a lemon sherbert canopy that exponentiated the sun to piercing strength. He hoped its gaudiness drew attention away from him. He didn't belong here, was in fact eavesdropping. He

dolph watched, concentrating, squinting his eyes to see it all at once as they outlined the air. He could *feel* what they were building, not just see it. He asked his father if they could say hello to them when it was over. But his father asked him why. Why meant it was ridiculous to want to do such a thing.

Randolph wiped at the sweat pooling along his collar. A small figure assayed around the mimes, a clutch of blueprints in his hand: the troupe director. His B&W checkered pants flapped with wind and gesture. Alligator boots kicked puffs of dust. Randolph thought the use of reptile skin curious; perhaps the man felt a resonance with reptile

Adam Corbín Fusco's

The Hand of Bastion

wanted to watch, wanted to see this troupe in action and perhaps talk to them.

Randolph felt awe and dread at once. I can't go through with it, he thought. If I do they might laugh, say it can't be done, and then it will all come down upon me.

The canopy rippled, echoey like a church. A neighboring tent sheltered a handful of visitors. They fidgeted, bored, catching the heated fragrance of pepper and lime from the tables of food beside him.

Peering through the pattern made by the tether lines, he saw the mimes enter the site. Flatbed trucks stacked with sandwiched prefab idled nearby.

When he was seven Randolph's father took him to the fielding of Magister's Grandstand. It was a full troupe of twenty-five. They even needed scaffolding to get to the higher places. From their confident hands they etched the air with buttresses, arches, columns thick with weight. Randolph was excited by the sight of the crowd and the regal bearing with which the troupe performed. The audience, however, stood limp, uninterested. It wasn't special to them, nor to his father, who had taken Randolph out of a sense of duty. But Ran-

fields as if there were something of the snake about him.

"Do you have another of those?"

Randolph jumped. The woman had come upon him by surprise. Caught, he fumbled for another 'fellow and handed it to her. She produced a flame and lit it.

"This is a private showing," she said coolly. "Or did you come for the food?"

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "I didn't know. I was just . . . interested in this troupe."

"Are you building?"

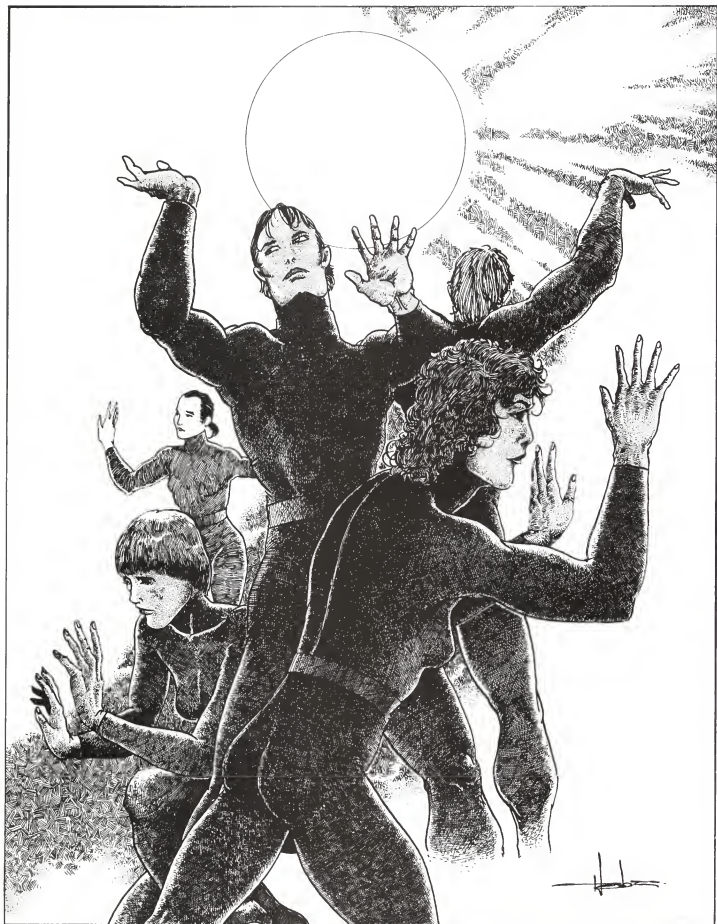
He shrugged. "I've heard of them. In the papers." He swallowed hard. She was uncommonly pretty. He felt embarrassed, attracted to the sharp crack of her herbal perfume. It put a wall between them.

"They're not too showy," she said, pluming smoke into the air, "though Turquin adds a bit of theater with his bumbling. It's a bore. I can hardly stand it. Can you?"

"Well, I — I often attend —"

"But they're the best." She thrust her hands

art by Bob E. Hobbs



into her indigo jacket. "They better be. It's my house. I'm Amanda Pale." She turned to watch the proceedings.

"Randolph," he said.

The fielding had begun. The mimes arranged themselves at equal spacings. Wooden stakes and a scant number of chalk lines provided orientation. Staccato hands slapped the air with increasing resistance. They moved with precision, taking their time, concentrating. One did stairs. Another outlined a window.

He focused on one mime, tall and wire-thin. Her bone structure was square as if shaved for efficiency; the black she wore exaggerated this to the degree of mannequins. She reached a corner and, as if puzzled, traced its shape with agonizing detail. He felt the sharpness of it.

"Amanda!" It was the troupe director, stepping lightly toward them. He dabbed at his face with a lace kerchief. "You must watch, dear. Hadn't I told you that?"

"Oh, yes," she said, flicking ash. "That would be important, I suppose."

"You don't listen, as always." The director shifted his weight into a delicate pose and regarded Randolph. "I don't believe we've been introduced."

"This is Mr. Randolph. He has crashed my showing on the pretense of having heard of you," the woman said mischievously. "He seems a calculating bidder. He has provided me a suitable distraction from my family. And he politely has not touched the food."

"Pleased," said the man. "My card."

Randolph accepted a wedge of pressed cream with an amber embossment depicting the skeleton of a building, open to reveal a working of gears, pulleys, wheels. It read: Environmental Phase Design/Turquin, director. Randolph shook the paper-dry hand.

"I'd heard you were the best," he said.

Turquin spared an arched eyebrow for Amanda Pale. "Certainly not from this lady. She won't even deem to watch, which is the most important part."

Amanda Pale shrugged and made a show of focusing on the action.

"And you would like to hire us?" asked Turquin with a cordial smile.

Randolph's forehead beaded with sweat. "Well, it is a project of sorts."

Turquin named a price. Randolph thought hard, then countered with one of his own.

Turquin dismissed him with a flourish. "No, sorry. For that price you can try the streets. Soloists. Try them, or harlequins. But they are risky."

"This is my second house with Turquin," Amanda Pale said to him glibly. "There's no bar-

gaining. You have to be prepared for the price."

Randolph didn't feel prepared for anything. "Yes, you're right. I was just wondering what your price would be. Actually, it's not really a house I'm building." They won't understand, he thought. An invisible curtain descended between them.

"Oh, see? He's cunning," said Amanda Pale. "Bid him down, Randolph. He'll take the bait."

"Amanda, dear, must you?" Turquin squeaked. He turned to Randolph. "Something smaller then? Bigger? Is it a porch? A carport? Pagoda or gazebo? A fence, perhaps?"

Randolph felt quite looked down upon by this little man. He had the air of one of those Sunday preachers who strutted on the pulpit stage swinging a loud voice to provide a stature he didn't have.

"No, nothing like that," said Randolph. "I'm just here to watch. It's more a private matter." Because, he thought, I'm not building anything at all.

Turquin shrugged, exchanged a glance with Amanda Pale, and turned to the proceedings.

The mimes had progressed nicely, but their exhaustion showed. The heat was seeping into their black. One, the wiry girl, abruptly stepped outside the square and marched toward a cluster of trailers.

Turquin jolted. "Wait!" he called to her. "You're not finished yet!"

"I need a break, Turquin," she yelled back.

The little man was shocked. "You can't do that!"

"It's the heat," she said irritably over her shoulder. "You can't expect us to keep up in these conditions. Enough. Over."

"What conditions?" He flourished his baton of blueprints. "Ungrateful street urchin!" He stepped down to the site where the other mimes were standing idle, watching the exchange.

Randolph crushed out his longfellow, shocked. She had talked. She had stepped away from the fielding without regard to its maintenance or the continuity of the performance. She was an abrupt, brusque girl. He thought they had more control than that. All the other fieldings he had attended had never been interrupted or disturbed. The shell of his apprehension cracked. They seemed accessible.

Amanda Pale crossed her arms and laughed. Randolph stepped over the line between the sun and shade with discomfort, scrambled down the hill toward the trailers. He had seen the one into which the girl disappeared.

Randolph knocked on the door. The girl opened it, towel in hand.

"May I have a word with you?" he asked.

She looked him up and down. "You a friend of Turquin?"

"No."

She shrugged, sat down at her make-up table.

It had a mirror with white lights around it. She wiped at her face with the towel. "Close the door. It's hot."

He crossed over the threshold awkwardly, selected a stool. Here he was, sitting with one of them, one of the ones who felt. *Why* . . .

"You don't wear make-up," he said.

"Ah, no. That's for harleys." She patted her neck with the towel. Autumn curly-cues fanned around amber eyes reflecting in the mirror. "We don't need that stuff. The streets, though, they use it for theatrical purposes. They'll say it's to focus. Anonymity and all. But that there's for art, see. This is science." She smiled, displaying the gap of a missing incisor. "You're just gonna sit and let me prattle on, ain't ya. Are you a friend of that Amanda Pale lady?"

"No. Just an observer. I was talking to your director about a job."

"Not with me in it. Can you believe the schedule he puts us on? Did he call me a street urchin?"

"Yes."

"Then it's over with me and him." She stood and stretched her bony frame. Her head nearly brushed the ceiling. "My name's Dalia." She was a scarecrow. Hip cocked, she fanned herself with the towel. "That man will charge you Fortune's Mint. Did he?"

"Yes. But I didn't accept."

Her eyes squinted. "So why you here?"

"I don't need a whole troupe, I don't think."

"Yeah. And . . ."

He cleared his throat. "What I need done, it's not a house."

"What is it then?"

He shifted uncomfortably. "It's not about building something, it's about taking something down."

She had a wide slash of a mouth, one corner of which was caught in a perpetual droop. "Sounds interesting."

"Do you work independently?"

"Me? Well, no. I mean, I never have."

"Would you consider it? For smaller pay?"

"I may be independent now anyway."

"Would you?"

"To spite Turquin?"

"For any reason you want."

"Sure!" The energy in her body released in a ratcheting motion, flinging the towel away. She smiled, dusted off her hands. He thought she was beautiful.

When he left, hovering past the canopies, a crane was lowering the first prefab wall into place.

The heron stood in marsh with beak angling to the air, charcoal-drawn, its feathers dusty rubbings on the paper. He often worked on

his illustrations while sitting in his yard, letting his skin as well as the paper soak up sunlight; but he had to admit that outdoor light worked against him when trying to get the soft tones. Indirect sunlight was best. Church-light.

He had always drawn birds. Even back then, as a child. They were doves, what he drew on the church program; but his father had scolded him just the same, and dragged him crying from the pew at the end of the service and displayed it to the frowning preacher shaking hands at the door.

She appeared at the fence gate. He stood away from his easel and waved. Instead of her black she wore a blue sundress that gave her more shape. It didn't slow the angled motion of her walk. She can move with such rapidity, he thought, that if she moved fast enough her field would not be able to catch up, would just barely snap back into place, or drop away by its own weight . . .

"You an artist?" she asked with her lopsided grin.

"I illustrate textbooks," he said, putting charcoal and eraser down on the easel. He regarded her for a moment. "It's similar to what you do. Drawing fields. Getting to the outline of something. That's what a drawing is."

Dalia nodded, shrugged. "Yeah. Guess so. Do you always do birds?"

"No. That's just a current assignment. It's on evolution. That's a funny thing. Drawing is like tracing evolution — evolution of forms."

He lit a 'fellow to cover his nervousness. She smiled at him politely, but he knew she didn't understand a thing he meant. "Does Turquin know you came here?" he asked.

"I don't know. He knows I'm out. I really don't care." She cast her eyes over the woods, the yard, the house. "Well, it don't look like it's falling apart."

"Oh, it isn't. Here, let me take you inside." He opened the back door for her, waited for her to enter, then, hesitating, slid in behind her.

His house was Edwardian wood. A gingerbread house. Its polished mahoganies and dusty pines were compacted in a quaint, two storey frame. The wood panelling of the living area framed the smell of book leather. One wall was pinned with the fluttering sketches of finches, herons, swallows.

Randolph fixed two glasses of sherry and handed one to her. "Have you quit with Turquin?"

"Nah, he needs me too much." She strolled about the room, glancing at the drawings, taking slips from her glass. "And . . . I guess I need him, at least the money I do."

"But he doesn't treat you well."

"Better than the streets. I blow up at him sometimes. He takes it."

"He called you a street urchin."

"Yeah and so?" She was caught in buttercup

bars of light from the door glass. "I was one. Urchin or orphan, I don't know the difference. The street ones, they drew me into their theater." The sherry touched her lips. "That's 'cause I was just another street fixture for them to play off of, and I got caught up in it. Did that for a while. Then Turquin came along."

She moved through the bars. He was fascinated by her. If I break this glass right now, he thought, how long would the form stay in my hand; and if I handed it to her, would she be able to make it last?

"Is it fun, what you do?" he asked. "It's like being an artist."

"Guess so, it's fun. But it's not like art. Too much work. Being outside and all, in the heat."

"If I weren't an artist, I think I'd be a mime."

She swished her skirt. "Well, if I weren't a mime I'd probably be an artist. Ever see street chalkers? They cover the entire asphalt with what's in their heads. Beautiful. I'd do that. I'd be a designer like that." She shrugged with quick efficiency. "So is this an interview or something? What's the deal with the house?"

Randolph crushed out the 'fellow. "I'm sorry. It's not the house."

She frowned. "It's not?"

"I mean, it is, in a way. I moved here two years ago. I like it because it's far away from things. But it's hard for me to live here." He scratched his head. "Can't you feel it?"

"Feel what?"

"What I've been trying to find out is, well — just as you can put up a field, can you take one down?"

"Guess so."

"Buildings evolve too, I would think. Like birds . . . and drawings, and people." When he approached the back door he made a right angle, avoiding the corner. He gripped his glass. "You move about so easily. I can't." He stood still. "The evidence, it's in the carpet. Little lines. Little impressions." He pointed out a finger-thick depression in the carpet that ran a few feet, then angled into the wall.

She looked puzzled. He hurried to explain. "See? There's others. There's two parallel ones in the middle of the floor. And a box shape in that corner."

She scuffed her foot over one of the lines.

"They don't go away," said Randolph. "Sometimes it's just a change in the direction of the nap."

"Why is that a problem, mister? You oughtta get new carpet."

"No. There's a fielding here."

"Here? Where?"

"Don't you feel it? It makes those lines."

She looked at him for a long moment. Her out-

line seemed to soften. The tenseness of her shoulders disappeared. "The street chalkers would make real pretty hopscotch boxes for us. With blue and pink? We had a rule, couldn't step on the lines. I couldn't make it, though. Too tall and bulky. I didn't see the difference." She put down her glass.

"A fielding overlaps this house," he said, stumbling over the words. "Of another building. A past building. When it got knocked down or whatever, the field remained."

"What's it look like?"

"Well, I haven't *seen* —"

"I know — felt. How big is it?"

"It's bigger than this house." He cleared his throat. "It's a cathedral."

He took a sip of the sherry and breathed deeply. Would she believe him? He was crazy, to be sure, bringing her here, as if it would make sense then, to him. But she would understand, could understand . . .

She bent down, poised and posed, to examine one of the lines. She ran her hand over it delicately. She smiled at him, a little wistfully, the half-frown, hair dangling into her eyes. Then she put her hand on the air, pressing it flat.

He sighed. "It's there, isn't it."

Her head tipped, flung a straggle of hair away from her lashes. "Yeah."

"It's possible that something can get . . . left behind?"

"Yeah. Possible." She got to her feet while pressing both hands against the air perpendicular to the line in the carpet. She reached out along the invisible surface, slowly, caressingly.

"It's hard for me to move past the lines," Randolph said. "I get stuck. I feel them. I sense them. I go around them, or have to will myself through them. Have to break through."

"Yeah. I know," she said idly. She moved to another part of the room, began tracing a column there.

It was beautiful, watching her. She moved with grace, but with a conservation of energy that allowed for no misinterpretation. She slapped the air. With each efficient rendering he saw it take shape. Instead of only sensing them, knowing they were there, he began to see the forms. Her gentle rapidity traced them until they hung before his eyes.

"They permeate the whole house," he said.

"I can see that."

"I have to get rid of them. I thought, someone like you could — could do that."

She spared a glance at him, then her body grew rigid. Her hands lay flat against the solid air — then pushed through it.

"You *can* do it," Randolph cried. "That's wonderful."

"It ain't so hard." She smiled droopily.

She glided around the room, detecting the walls, pushing through them until she could move her hands effortlessly past. "Take me through the rest of the house," she said. "But keep your eye on me. That's the important part."

Right angles in the foyer indicated a line of square columns marching across it. The corner of his den was intersected by an outside wall; he showed her the darkening of the carpet. She painted the air with her hands at both locations, and, with effort, slid her fingers inside and pulled apart. In the kitchen the linoleum flooring held indentations that mapped one of the supports of the crossing. She chopped the air with her hand and moved about on tiptoes until the entire space was clear.

Randolph was sick with relief. He could feel how much easier it was to move about the house. She was magic.

The doorbell chimed. Randolph hesitated. Why interruptions now? With a glance at Dalla, he went to the door.

It was Turquin. He was dressed in daisy, with spotted kerchief. "Mr. Randolph, I presume? Yes. You are not so hard to track down after all. I believe you have one of my contracted among you, involved in an illegal transaction." He buffaloeed into the hall. "Dalla! There you are!"

Dalla turned away from a wall, inflamed. "What are you doing here?"

"You are on contract, dear Dalla," said Turquin.

"I can do any job I want."

"No, Dalla, you can't. Did you think it hard for me to conclude what was going on? This man was inquiring about my price, then paid you a private visit. Or was it, perhaps, something other than fielding he was interested in?"

Dalla glanced at Randolph. He felt a sinking in the pit of his stomach. He didn't want to reveal why he had hired her. The man was not one to understand such a thing.

Turquin pivoted and entered the living area. He cast a cold eye over Randolph's drawings. "What are you two doing, anyway? Mr. Randolph's house is already built." He scraped a boot across the floor. "An addition? A fence?" Turquin tilted his head. "You look ashamed, Mr. Randolph."

"Leave him alone," said Dalla.

"She's taking something down," Randolph fumbled. "For me. A field. An overlapping field."

"Aaaah," cooed Turquin. "I've heard of people like you."

"Stop it," said Dalla.

"It's a cathedral," Randolph blurted.

"A cathedral!" Turquin's eyes flew wide. "Yes, of course. Is it done?"

"Well, mostly —"

"Don't play into his hands," Dalla said.

Turquin rounded on her. "You don't even believe in it." He turned to Randolph. "She as much believes in fields as you or I — or just I, that is. She's from the streets, didn't you know that? Did you think she really believed in all of it?"

"What's not to believe?" asked Randolph.

Dalla fumed at the little man. "Some people feel it more than others, that's all."

"Oh, come now," said Turquin. "You know the things you've said to me about it. It's nothing to you. A performance. A job."

Randolph felt a growing panic. How could he say that, a troupe director? The lines of the room became skewed. "Is that all it is to you?" he asked her.

Dalla's hand combed through her hair. "I do believe."

"Of course, of course," smiled Turquin. "So let's play along. Mr. Randolph, you are not an architecturalist, though you are keen to structure. Witness your drawings. You know form. But who's to say your house was fielded when it was built? Maybe they used what was already here."

"Cut it out," Dalla said.

"Maybe your fine abode here is buttressed by the cathedral. And well, now, it will decay in short order. It will settle more, now that the field is gone. A crack in the plaster here and there. A heavy wind or rain and the roof will collapse. What then? Will you mourn your cathedral? Well surely — then."

"Shut up!" shouted Dalla. Randolph eased himself into a chair, exhausted.

"But you are safe," Turquin continued. "Dalla here is not a believer. How could she be effective in taking down the walls?" He turned to her. "Come, girl. Time to go." Without another look Turquin exited the house.

She gazed at him with what seemed to be affection. Her face changed then. It grew harder, marked by the lines of the street, the hardships of penny performances. He hadn't seen that in her before.

"Did you trick me?" he asked breathlessly.

"The walls are gone," she said softly, and left the house.

Randolph sank into the chair. He felt betrayed. Not by Turquin, no. Nor by the girl. It was time for a choice. His soul felt stretched like taffy, one way then the other, but still within him, at least.

The fields were gone. He had watched her closely, and could feel them no longer. He had tasted freedom, and would keep it, even as he sat there, watching a bit of plaster tear away from the wall. ■

the Green

This building was old when my sister's roller skates had keys, and the rent is too high, but it's near the bookstores and coffee shops and the garbage gets collected every Friday.

Daylight doesn't get much past the grimy windows on each landing, and the naked bulbs are anemic and few. Every flight up, I shift the bag of books I just bought to my other arm and think about summers on the California coast when I was a boy. By the fifth flight up I'm breathing hard and swearing I'll stop buying books and cappuccinos and save for a move to California. Or at least to a building with an elevator.

I unlock the door, turn on the light, and close my eyes while I slowly count to three. This gives the roaches time to scurry into the walls and under the fridge. I tell myself that if I can't see them, they aren't really there. I hate roaches.

The apartment is silent, and even though it's summer, I hum *Jingle Bells* because it's the first thing that comes to mind. The tune covers the silence and keeps me company. Then another sound comes through the wall, clashing with my cheery Christmas carol. The woman next door is crying.

You learn to mind your own business when you live in the city. It's just one of the rules in the Survival Skills Rulebook that you start

I live on the beach, by the deep blue waters of the Mendocino coast, where the sweet ocean breezes comb back pines and brush, and the ocean's endless song puts all my daily problems into perspective.

No, not really, but that's what I tell myself as I walk up the six flights of stairs to my apartment...

by Sonia Orin Lyriss

art by Michael KucharSKI

writing in your head, from day one in the schoolyard.

If it's a sobbing woman, you especially mind your own business. Where there's a woman crying, there's usually a man who doesn't want you to be so concerned. Even so, it tugs at me. I wish she'd stop.

I hum louder and put on water for coffee. I slap a filter into the cone and pour in the coffee. After a few minutes, I slowly tilt the pot's boiling water into the cone. The

coffee provides me a focus; it's a well-ordered system that I can actually affect.

The sobbing stops. My shoulders relax.

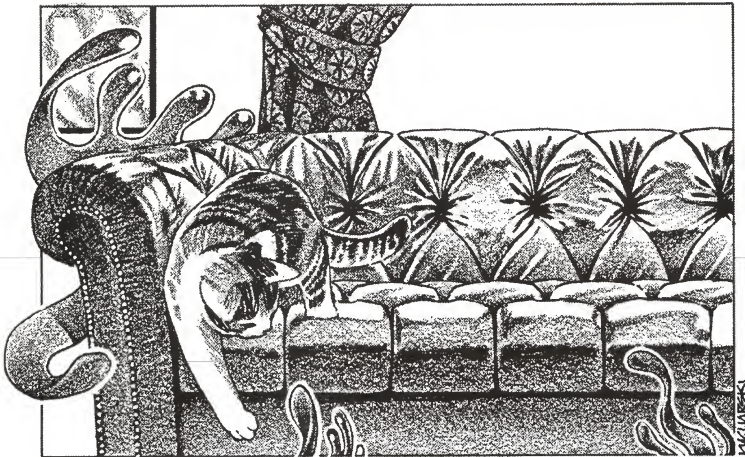
A minute later there's a knock on my door. It doesn't take a brilliant guy like me to figure out it's her, and a look through the peephole confirms it. Her eyes are wide and her blonde hair is a bit rumped, but maybe that's the way she always wears it, I don't know. I've lived next door to her for years, but we've never done more than nod at each other over bags of groceries and cat food while we fish for keys. I don't even know her name.

I consult my Survival Rulebook. It tells me to show no fear.

I unlock the door and open it as wide as my stance. I put on my best average-joe expression.

"Yeah?" I say.

"Help me," she says. "Please."



I don't want to get in the middle of it, whatever it is. I squint, to play dumb.

"What?"

"There's something under my couch," she says. "It ate my shoes."

A nutcase, I decide. Plenty of those in this city. The Rulebook tells me to get rid of her.

I nod as though I hear this sort of thing every day.

"I'll call the police for you," I say. I start to close the door. She steps in, her body between the door and the frame. I stop.

"It's not a police kind of thing," she says. "It's an extraterrestrial kind of thing."

I check the Rulebook. It still says to get rid of her.

"Yeah," I say, "I had that last year. The Super's in 101. He'll fix it for you."

She looks at me like I'm the kind of guy who laughs at Saturday morning cartoons. My insulted ego threatens to come upstairs and take over my mouth's motor control, but I kick it back down to its cave. Survival first.

"Look," I say, hoping to convince her I'm useless, "I've got to watch the news, you know?"

She shakes her head frantically, looks like she might cry again, then whispers: "There's an alien slime in my apartment. It's all over my bedroom. It already ate my shoes. It'll eat into your apartment, too, if you don't do something."

"Huh," I say thoughtfully.

The Rulebook says that if it's going to come into my apartment, maybe I should check it out.

I wave her back and follow her into the hall. I'm brighter than I look so I twiddle the knob on my way so I don't lock myself out.

"Come on," I say in my I'm-a-guy-and-I-can-fix-it tone, "let's take a look."

She hesitates, then opens the door to her apartment and steps back into the hall, offering me entrance. I walk in.

She has one of those neat apartments that women can somehow make, even in roach-infested buildings like this. The walls are clean and creamy white, which makes me wonder how she managed to get the Super to paint hers when I've been at him for five years to do mine.

There are pictures on the wall, a powder-

blue couch, and a wood and glass coffee table. Then I notice the strong smell, like a mix of tar, applesauce, and ozone. I look down and I see it, starting to cover the expensive oriental rugs she's got over the ugly brown carpeting. The stuff is green, kelly green, and it pools in from the bedroom door and creeps out from under the couch. As I watch, it starts to circle the legs of the coffee table.

Maybe it's paint. Or Liquid Plumber gone bad. But somehow I know it's not. Maybe I read too many weird stories.

That reminds me of something I read, a theory by some famous guy whose name I can't remember, about how everyone thinks of themselves as a hero who will someday do something really brave. Sure, I thought of myself that way a few times, but I realize now that I didn't mean it.

Then something occurs to me. I turn around. She's standing in the doorway, staring at the floor.

"Hey," I say. "Why were you crying?"

She puts her fingertips to her lips. "It ate my shoes," she says.

That doesn't quite jibe, but I'm not sure why, so I put it on the back burner and look back at the green.

The stuff is spreading, but real slow, like thick mud. I wonder if it could be some sort of sewage leak, but I don't think so. The green thickens around the coffee table's back legs and then starts to climb.

"Maybe it's hungry," I say.

"Oh my God," she says, "do something."

I think about some of the books I've read.

"Maybe it's trying to communicate with us," I say. I try to imagine how green slime would communicate. I decide to come back to it later.

The table tilts slightly, the way it would if the back legs were suddenly a little shorter.

"Hungry," I say, nodding. "Time to leave."

The green starts moving slowly in my direction. I take a step backward and then turn.

She has keys in one hand and a small gun in the other. She points the gun at me.

"You stay," she whispers. Her hand is shaking.

I give a half-laugh like she just said something funny. Downplay, downplay. I take another step forward.

"I mean it," she says, waving the gun. "I'll shoot you."

The Rulebook tells me that there's only one good way out of this apartment, and that's through the door blocked by this woman and her gun.

I cross my arms. "Now look," I say, in my best irritated-but-still-a-nice-guy tone. "You ask me to come in here to look at the green stuff, and I do, and it's green stuff, all right. I don't know what it is, a chemical spill or what, but it's not good. So let's get out of here."

I hear something behind me, a faint slurping sound, and the skin on the back of my legs crawls. The Rulebook says this is a really good time to play it cool, so I don't turn around.

"No," she says, her voice breaking into a half-sob. "It wants another sample. You have to stay."

The problem on the back burner jumps to a front burner. I remember the catfood.

"It ate your cat," I say. Her expression crumples for a moment, confirming my guess, but the gun is still pointed at my stomach.

"You're not going to shoot me," I say confidently. I take another step forward. What the hell, I think, it works on tv.

Her expression goes blank and the Rulebook says stop, so I do. I can see that she's on the edge and I don't want her to go over, especially not with a gun in her hand, but I'd be a lot more sympathetic if I was on the other side of the door.

"You think you can buy this thing off with a sacrifice?" I give a short laugh and shake my head. "It never works that way. Don't you watch any horror movies?"

Something creaks behind me and there's a *slup* sound. The Rulebook is screaming at me to get out. She's backing out the open door and that's good, but she's looking up and past me, eyes wide, and that's bad.

Now I *have* to look, so I do. Behind me, the floor and walls are all green. I hear a humming sound, like a machine, or maybe a bunch of mosquitoes. The sound grows and pulses and then sounds something like spoken words.

"Do not be afraid," it says. "We will not hurt you."

I've heard that one before.

It says it again and again, like a recording. The green is moving faster now, gathering across the ceiling.

The Rulebook tells me this is a good time to risk the gun.

"Move, move, move," I yell at her in my best born-to-be-a-drill-sergeant voice, as I run at the door and pray she doesn't shoot. She doesn't. Instead she jumps back out of the apartment and slams the door shut, just before I get there. The green on the ceiling beats me to the door, too, filling the cracks between the door and the frame. I turn the knob and pull. Nothing happens.

The Rulebook tells me to stay cool and show no fear.

I panic. I hurl myself against the door. I pull frantically. The door doesn't budge. I do it again. It still doesn't budge.

There's green everywhere except the door and under my feet. I slam my back against the door.

The couch looks like it's covered with fresh green paint. Paint that moves. The coffee table's legs are half the length they were when I came in.

I grab my best I-don't-take-no-shit tone.

"That's enough," I say loudly. "You. Shut up and listen."

The drowning stops suddenly. I gulp air. My heart pounds. I hope the green has stopped creeping toward me, but I don't pause to look.

"Back the hell off and listen," I say in the same tone.

Show no fear.

The green quivers, inches from my shoes, inches from my head.

"It's like this," I say. "You can eat everything in your path, but sooner or later we humans are going to destroy you. Crush, remove, kill, annihilate. Are you listening?"

The green hasn't gotten closer. It's listening.

"I don't know if you're hungry, curious, or bored," I say, "but if you want to survive on this planet you'd better learn some rules."

Rules. What rules? "Yeah, rules," I say, stalling for time. "Stay out of sight, that's the first rule. If we see you, we'll destroy you."

Play it cool. I'm sweating like a pig.

"And the second rule is, don't eat stuff in apartments. Not tables, couches, cats, and especially not people. You get hungry, you can eat—"

What? I think fast. "You can eat styrofoam. Or sewage. Or roaches." I nod. "Roaches are

good. They're dumb as shit and full of protein. Eat as many of them as you want. Anywhere. Even apartments. Especially apartments. So. Any questions?"

The green near my head and feet is quivering, but it isn't coming closer. I remember to breathe.

The mosquito sound pulses again and the pulses make words: "The other promised us a sample."

Right. The sample.

"Yeah," I say, feeling grumpy about my neighbor. Ex-neighbor, more likely. "Well, tell you what, if you find her, you can have her. In the meantime, stop eating the furniture and the carpet. Go find some roaches. And stay out of sight. Got it?"

Somehow that doesn't seem strong enough, but I haven't got much to work with.

"I've got a mixer," I say ominously. I imagine whipping up the green into frothy foam. "And I'll use it." I'm sure I can figure out how. "So back off."

I wait a long moment. I imagine that the green is thinking, or something that serves the same purpose. Then it slowly retreats, pulling back from the door into the apartment, like the surf backing up before a tidal wave. I don't wait. I pull on the door, and this time it opens. I slam it shut behind me.

My neighbor's gone, of course. If I were her I'd leave the state. Better yet, the continent.

And maybe I should, too. California seems like a good idea right now. Or Hawaii. But I don't have that kind of money. And I wonder if I can go anywhere the green can't get to.

I consult the Rulebook. It mulls it over and decides that the green is like a schoolyard bully; it's better to know where he is than to be surprised. I'm probably as safe as I can be, right here, next door to the green.

Me and my mixer.

I go back to my apartment. The coffee is cold. I drink it anyway.

California is probably too sunny. Not enough coffee shops.

Every day I come home and walk up six flights of stairs to my apartment. I unlock the door, turn on the light, shut my eyes, and count to one.

The green is faster than the roaches. ■

The Second Experiment

by J. Brian Clarke

1 When the director of Bureau Ninety and her predecessor arrived at Re-

art by
Keith Minnion

search Unit 3, it was a few days after reports of Hemmal's discovery had spread tachy-
oned news ripples to Earth and the eleven
worlds of the New Cooperative.

The director was already known here on Kurilik. Janine Duschesne had been with the bureau since graduating *magna cum laude* from the Bonn Academy, and prior to her promotion to the top had already served three years in charge of field operations. She was also a veteran of several successful tours, including the one on Kurilik.

Donald Juan Taylor was not so well known, except by reputation. Starting with a three-man office in the fifth sub-basement of Geneva's Government Tower, Taylor had quietly built B90 to its current status as an indispensable division of the Department of Extra Terrestrial Affairs (which at the time had eighty-nine other divisions, hence Bureau Ninety).

Yet when they were ushered into Eldon Regehr's office, the distinguished visitors projected comfortable middle-class, rather than two who had dedicated their

lives to orchestrating humankind's expansion beyond the Solar System.

Duschesne was a trim fair-haired woman in a conservative red jump suit. Her smile was warm. "Eldon, it has been a long time. How are you?"

"Harried, married, hapless and undernourished as usual," R.U.3's stout administrator replied as he patted his stomach. "And you?"

"Harried, unmarried, and still addicted to my own cooking."

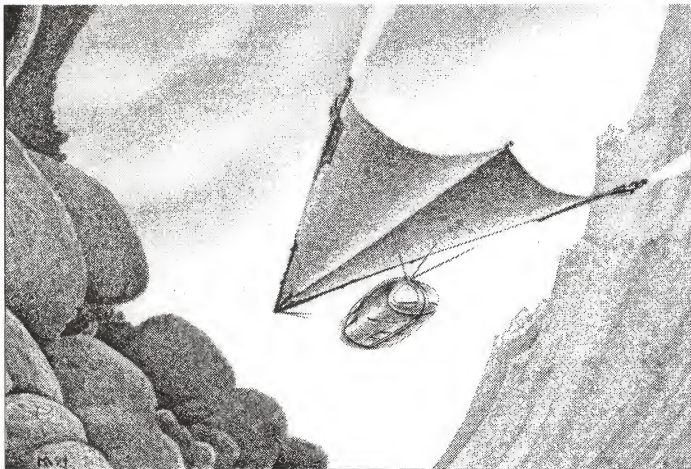
"Not hapless?"

"Give me time. I only just got this job."

Still chuckling, Regehr turned to the second visitor. "Doctor Taylor, I am not sure if I should throw myself prone or genuflect."

"I am an ex-deity now, so a simple genuflect will do," the gray-bearded man smiled as he returned the handshake. "And please call me DJ." He jerked his thumb toward his companion. "My successor persuaded me to accompany her on a familiarization tour of the newer outposts. We were on Hemming's World when Geneva notified us of the discovery."

Duschesne nodded. "So being only days away from Kurilik, we decided to make the detour. Your find here has caused quite a stir."



"To put it mildly," Taylor said. "Have you dated it yet?"

"Three million years, give or take a hundred thou. Tentative, of course."

"Of course," Duschesne echoed drily. "When can we see it?"

"As soon as you like. When I heard you were coming, I ordered a dragonfly put on standby. If you want to freshen up, a bite to eat—"

"We can bite on the way there and freshen up later," Taylor said, ignoring his companion's frown. "Heaven's, man, I haven't felt this way since I was a lad wanting to open my Christmas presents!"

He was obviously enjoying his retirement.

2 Soon they were flying east aboard one of the Research Unit's four aircraft. Basically a pressurized gondola suspended below an enormous triangular wing, the Dragonfly was a reliable design which had served on thin-atmosphere worlds for decades. Thrust at a steady four hundred kilometers an hour by the wing's purring jetpods, they passed over red ochre deserts, winding canyons and eroded impact craters. Noting the astonishing similarity of this fifth planet of 82 Eridani to Mars, Taylor idly wondered if God had sneaked in a few clones after he tired of creating new planets.

In the next seat, Duschesne gazed through the window at the local equivalent of Olympus Mons. The volcano's enormous shadow seemed to cover half the world. "I have pleasant memories of this place. It was one of my more relaxing assignments."

Taylor laughed. "False modesty, Jan?" He turned to Regehr. "The Cooperative accepted Earth's jurisdiction on Kurilik only because I sent her with instructions to negotiate the hell out of them, and she did precisely that! Khalin Brewster, their senior man at the talks, later told me that Duschesne is undoubtedly the most obstreperous of all human females."

"It seems you have chosen a worthy successor, DJ," the administrator commented with a smile.

"Not my choice. She was appointed by majority vote of the Council."

"But I am sure they sought appropriate advice."

"Of course."

Duschesne sighed.

3 Sixty-four minutes later, the Dragonfly's pilot rotated jetpods and lowered the aircraft to a dusty landing. Nearby, half a dozen robot excavators stood like metal statuary around the rim of a pit fifty meters wide and about a third as deep. A suited figure trotted toward the aircraft as its passengers disembarked under the shadow of the dropping wing.

"Johann Eucart?" Duschesne asked tentatively as she identified the White Dove shoulder patches, then exclaimed with pleasure as the newcomer flipped up his visor. The shaven head inside the helmet was austere, solemn.

"Your appointment is much deserved, friend Duschesne," the Cooperatist said with a small bow. To Regehr, "Greetings, friend Eldon."

"Greetings, friend Johann," Regehr returned with a polite inclination of his head.

Eucart turned to Taylor. "Elder Brewster told me much about you, Donald Taylor. Following your example, the Cooperative has created an organization similar to Bureau Ninety. In future, we will meet on level ground."

"I am flattered," Taylor said sincerely. "Is Khalin well?"

"Well and active. Elder Brewster is the first director of what we call Bureau Three."

"Good God," Duschesne muttered.

Regehr coughed. "I understand there is something you wish to show us?"

Eucart nodded. "Indeed friend Eldon." He led the way to the edge of the excavation, in which a flattened sphere about fifteen meters across was being painstakingly excavated from the detritus of eons.

"It is in strata laid down three million years ago. You are looking at a covering of melted rock caused by the energy of impact."

Taylor wished he could finger his beard. "So it is a ship?"

"It is reasonable to assume so."

Duschesne was astonished. "But if it hit with enough force to melt rock, there should be nothing left!"

"I agree. It is evidence of a very advanced technology."

"Has anyone got inside?"

"Not yet. But we have found something else that is interesting."

The three newcomers followed Eucart down a ladder into the excavation. One of the several workers came over and was introduced as Cedrick Hemmal, the discoverer of the ancient ship.

"Have you told them about the designs?" the plump geologist asked his Cooperatist colleague.

"I am about to," Eucart pointed. "There, on the underside."

Sliding and stumbling on the rubble, the visitors followed Eucart and the geologist into a cavity excavated almost half way under the wreck. They had to stoop, as Eucart indicated a clear area of hull. Etched into the dull metal was a circle enclosing several randomly-spaced dots. Two other circles, still only partly exposed, each enclosed what appeared to be an identical pattern.

The Cooperatist said, "We suspect the whole ship is covered with that design."

Duschesne reached up a gloved hand and fingered the pattern. "So what is it? A product of alien aesthetics? A code describing this particular ship? A chart of the home system?"

"Very good," Hemmal said. "Number three is warm."

Taylor was startled. "A chart?"

"Oh, yes. But not of a planetary system."

"Of what, then?"

Hemmal looked smug. "Quasars."

After a moment, Taylor whispered, "Of course."

Puzzled, Regehr looked at Taylor, then at Hemmal. "Of course what? Excuse me, gentlemen, but I am just a simple administrator. Why quasars?"

Eucart explained, "Being extra galactic, quasars make ideal beacons for interstellar navigation. That map uses them as pointers to a location which was apparently special to the people who built the ship. Home system, perhaps. Even a holy place."

Hemmal nodded. "I fed the design into the R.U.'s computer. After allowing for approximately three million years of stellar motion, Big Brain came up with a location reasonably close to Kurilik as starships go. Not very precise of course, but enough to reopen a can of worms." He chuckled. "Oh, yes, a very large can of worms."

"What are you talking about?" the Bureau 90 director demanded impatiently. "Where?"

The chuckle became laughter. "Consonance, of course. Where else?"

"Damn," said Donald Juan Taylor.

4 Consonance. Named by Jonathan Elby, an exo-biologist with a quirky sense of humor, the planet was mostly ocean. Its eleven percent land mass was distributed among thousands of islands, the largest less than five hundred kilometers across. Animals, other than a few winged varieties, were rare. But the flora, especially between the mid latitudes, was Elby's justification. It was as if an uncaring creator had forced incompatible pieces from a thousand different jigsaw puzzles into one gigantic nonsensical picture, in which the only thing in common was the base upon which the picture was assembled...

The planet itself.

After they landed at the spaceport (a euphemism for a concreted forest clearing with a homing beacon and a small maintenance facility) on a large island called Elby, Duschesne and Taylor were driven to Central Administration, where they were expected by Earth's senior official on Consonance.

"How the devil did Briossi end up here?" Duschesne wondered, referring to that official. Having

just settled into their quarters, she and Taylor were walking single-file along a raised boardwalk between the guest house and the main building. A riot of rainbow-hued foliage surrounded them, while overhead the sky darkened toward one of the frequent, massive electrical storms of this ocean world. The air smelled strange, with a subtle yet not unpleasant odor reminiscent of coffee and new leather. "That lady has piled up enough years, I am somewhat surprised she is still in active harness."

"Like me, for instance?"

The woman laughed. "DJ, you are only a tourist!" She became serious. "If it was not for the find on Kurilik, I would have my doubts about our commitment to this screwy planet. As far as people and resources are concerned, Consonance has been a black hole too damn long."

Taylor agreed. "Ten years ago, I recommended a modest scale-down. I was promptly rapped on the knuckles by political lame brains who insisted the Consonance Project is all-or-nothing. Faced with that kind of choice—" A regretful sigh. "It has been the cause of much blood on the Council floor, some of it mine."

Duschesne gestured at the rustling cacophony of color around them. "Has anyone figured out how all of this came about?"

"Nothing definite. After all, in a few million years living systems do evolve. But I understand genetic matching hints at something in the order of several hundred ancestral worlds."

The woman's eyes widened in surprise. "That many?"

Taylor nodded. "Someone, sometime, went to a lot of trouble to create this botanical mishmash."

The first crash of thunder shocked their ears as they entered the semi-underground main building, although a second set of doors shut out raucous nature as if cut by a switch. In an office lined with view panels, Alice Briossi, a brilliant planetologist who in recent years had become known as much for her environmental activism as for her scientific accomplishments, greeted them warmly.

"—and this is my deputy, Devon Gurandais."

Gurandais, a slender man with an expressionless face, politely inclined his head.

"When I heard Bureau Ninety was interested," Briossi continued, "I certainly did not expect them to send the current and former directors!"

"Pure coincidence I am afraid," Duschesne confessed as she and Taylor sat across from the administrator's cluttered desk. "We were already on Kurilik

when they deciphered the markings on that old ship."

"So you pulled weight and came," Gurandais said with a faint smile. "Cannot say I blame you. It is a remarkable discovery."

Taylor chuckled. "Not so long ago, I would have paid money to stay away from this place. Now—?" He spread his hands. "Although Director Duschesne and I undoubtedly have all the wrong qualifications, I would like to think that while we are here we can be of some assistance. Help you look for answers, perhaps."

Gurandais said seriously, "Answers are not the immediate priority, Doctor Taylor. First we need the right questions."

Alice Briossi nodded. A thin, bright-eyed woman with graying hair pulled in a bun behind her head, she folded skeletal hands on her desk. "One of our problems is that data is coming in faster than we can process it. During the weeks since the Kurilik discovery, this planet has been subject to more aerial and low orbit sensing than during the entire seventeen years since the original survey! By the way, have you ever read Elby's report?"

"Skimmed through it," Duschesne replied. "Of course I already knew that everything here is about as natural as a cultivated garden in a desert. You mentioned questions, and I can think of two. Who and why?"

The older woman chuckled. "A good start, perhaps closer to answering than you probably expect." She swiveled her chair as a panel behind her desk illuminated with a satellite image of a straggling archipelago.

"The island at the tip of that chain is One-Seven-Three, about seven hundred clicks from here." Briossi enlarged the image and used a laser pointer to indicate a spot near the center of the island. "Although it has been only ten days since the orbital net revealed a mass anomaly under that hill, our people have located and opened up the entrance to a massive underground complex. Interested?"

5 Next day. After turning over her duties to Gurandais, Briossi flew with Duschesne and Taylor to 173. As was normal for aerial navigation on Consonance, the erratic course was plotted to avoid several huge storms whose clouds towered like ethereal mountains almost to the edge of space. So they were stiff and tired when they finally stepped down from the helijet into a jungle clearing. A ground floater and its driver were waiting.

"We normally land at the complex," Briossi explained. "But this way, you have a chance to look at

**"But if it hit
with enough
force to melt
rock, there
should be
nothing left!"**

the local scenery."

As they were driven along a trail which rose gradually toward the center of the island, Taylor concentrated on the tiny creatures abundant around the huge blossoms bordering their way. The creatures seemed to be variations of a basic insectile life form. "Yesterday, I think I saw a terrestrial bird. Tiny, like a hummingbird."

Briossi twisted in her seat. "Where?"

"Near the boardwalk leading from the guest house."

"Would you mind making a formal report on that? It could be important."

"Of course. But does it make sense?"

"Oh, yes. There have been dozens of similar sightings, each substantiating the theory that Earth had visitors during the distant past. By the way, no one has spotted a terrestrial insect yet. So if you acquire a bee sting—"

"Make and report and *then* treat the sting," Duschesne said dryly. "Right?"

A faint smile. "Such dedication."

6 *There is a basic factor in the development of intelligent life. Competition.*

The success or failure of any species is a natural outcome of its reaction to competing life forms. The process is as much a basic component of the universe as are the billions of stellar fusion reactors out of which come the material and conditions to give light and — ultimately — life.

Nevertheless, in a crucible of the dimensions of a galaxy, there is always the statistical possibility of a rare combination of conditions allowing intelligence to develop without inter-species competition. In such a case, without the restraints normally imposed into genetic memory by the implacable process which is evolution, reach can disastrously exceed grasp. So it was with the Mehehri, who without thought of the consequences of failure, sought the shortcut road to godhood. Who failed in that search. And who, even as they failed, faced the specter of ultimate extinction.

Which should have been the end of it; a tragic byline of cosmic history. Unfortunately not all the works of the Mehehri vanished with their creators. And when some of those works were discovered—

7 The place was incredible. Tunnels, rooms and galleries interconnected in concentric circles around an eight-meter hemispherical core which resembled a combination museum and art display. Everything was illuminated by a soft, sourceless

light.

"Definitely botanical," Briossi commented unnecessarily as she gazed at the endless rows of illustrations lining the circumference of the central chamber. The colors and details of leaves, stalks and blossoms were as crisp as if they had been recorded only yesterday, and not millions of years before.

"Over here!" Disbelief on his face, Taylor was standing next to a long table. "What do you make of this?"

"What is it?" asked their guide, a young archeologist named Ephram Elofsson.

Briossi joined them. "I haven't seen one of those since I was a student." Marveling, the elderly planetologist studied the table-top network. "It's a test maze." She pointed. "From that space in the center, animals are required to find their way through the partitions to a reward in the form of food. The smarter the animal, the sooner it eats."

Taylor nodded. "There are all kinds of reasons and variations. The effect of diet on intelligence, for instance. Experiments involving inherited memory. The effectiveness of drug accelerators—"

Memory clicked into place. "I'll be damned," he whispered. He drew Duschesne aside. "Remember that antique book I kept in my office?"

She frowned. "Vaguely. On twentieth century science, wasn't it? Why do you ask?"

"A chapter on drug research explains a lot of the hit-and-miss results of those days. Laboratories collected specimens

of organic growth; plants, fungi, algae, you name it. They would concentrate a sample and test it for possible antibiotic properties. If the substance showed promise, they isolated the active component and ran further tests on animal subjects. Finally, if those tests were successful, a new drug was introduced into the market."

"Fascinating, if somewhat unscientific and hard on the animals," Duschesne commented doubtfully. "What is your point?"

Taylor gestured around him. "This place. The maze. The whole damn planet!"

Alice Briossi looked up with amusement, "What about the damn planet?"

Others drifted over, including a small man with thinning straw-colored hair. The small man said loudly, "The elixir of life, Doctor Taylor!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Elixir of life — you know; monkey glands, royal jelly, interferon, Jehenson's blocker and the rest. Live for ever and be smarter than Einstein. Human history

...the
Mehehri,
who...sought
the shortcut
road to
godhood.

is full of the search for the ultimate medicine. So maybe that is what these johnnies were looking for. I think so, anyway."

"You are—?"

"Benjamin Goodacre, systems engineer. I work here."

The irritating little man held out his hand, and not knowing what else to do Taylor accepted it. "You're not just being facetious, I hope."

Goodacre wagged a finger. "I never indulge in word games." He beckoned. "Let me show you what I mean."

He led the way through a narrow opening only half a meter wide although it was nearly three meters high, into a chamber dominated by more rows of picture-panels. "Fortunately, they had a fetish about illustrating everything."

He indicated the panels, on which were countless pictures of a six-legged animal. There was no indication of the animal's size, although the existence and dimensions of the maze suggested the equivalent of a hamster. The head was vaguely reptilian and set on a long, thin body covered with a mixture of scales and coarse hair.

"Notice how the pictures are arranged in pairs. The first of each pair shows the critter when it is apparently young, the other when it is old."

"Hmmm." Taylor studied one panel, then walked to the next. As he progressed, the pairs became separated by an increasing number of vertical graduations. An angular script was arranged in columns and rows around the pictures, with a single heavy black symbol above each pair. He surmised, "If the vertical graduations represent time—"

"There is more." They followed Goodacre into an even smaller chamber. Unlike the rest of the complex, this chamber was not stripped of equipment. It resembled an old fashioned chemistry laboratory, with flasks and retorts ranked alongside empty cabinets. A squat cylinder, a meter in diameter and about as high, stood on a pedestal in the center of the room.

Goodacre indicated rows of symbols on the cylinder's dazzling white surface. "As near as I can tell, those marks match those on the picture panels."

8 "Longevity," Taylor suggested later in a chamber outfitted as a conference lounge. "It's a pretty good bet that is what they were working on in the small lab."

"Based on vertical graduations between a bunch of pictures?" Briossi shook her head. "Sorry, DJ. To me, that comes under the classification long shot."

"It is more than that. Someone's remark about the elixir of life is not so far off if you consider the scope of this place. Such a mega-project must have been driven by a pretty potent incentive."

Ben Goodacre looked aggrieved. "That someone was me. Anyway, I am glad you see it my way."

The former B90 director frowned. The little man was smart, but probably not as much as he thought. An obnoxious combination.

"Sorry, but I began to think along those lines when I saw the illustrations. I suspect Consonance was set up as a kind of hold tank for botanical specimens from all over the galaxy, and not merely for the specific purpose of longevity research." Taylor hesitated. "Do we have any idea who these people were? What they looked like or where they came from?"

"Not yet." Anthropologist Luin Bhinamji, a tiny dark-haired woman who was the senior investigator on 173, added confidently, "But I am pretty sure they were humanoid, although tall and skinny."

"What makes you think so?"

"Arrangement of tables and cabinets. Seats. Doorways. The Quizzies sat like we do, walked like we do."

Briossi's gray eyebrows rose. "Quizzies?"

"Quizzies," Bhinamji echoed firmly.

The older woman sighed. "At least I can pronounce it."

**"I suspect
Consonance
was...a kind
of hold tank
for botanical
specimens..."**

9 Quizzies was not an inappropriate label for the mysterious beings who transformed Consonance for their own peculiar purpose millions of years before. Although work on such a planetary scale was beyond the current logistical capabilities of either Earth or the Cooperative, the existence of the test maze hinted at a methodology closer to that of the ferment of pre-space humanity.

So was there a hidden purpose to the complex beyond the obvious? What had happened to the Quizzies — did they still exist, perhaps as awesomely advanced entities in some unknown continuum? Or were they no more, like so many lesser species which had evolved to a dead end? In the darkness of his sleeping cubicle, in that half-world between sleep and waking, Taylor voiced his doubts aloud.

"It doesn't make sense!"

From a neighboring cubicle, a sleepy, "DJ, do you mind? You have been mumbling half the night."

He clambered out of his cot and began to pull on his clothes. "Duschesne, I am sorry. I guess I am hung up on too many contradictions."

He heard the sound of movement. "Such as?"

"The Quizzies, dammit! To a point I think I under-

stand them. Yet the fact they modified this planet for their own use, not to mention a ship surviving a crash which should have vaporized it, tells me they were incomparably advanced. My god, how can a monkey claim to understand a man?"

Fully dressed, Duschesne pulled aside the curtain to his cubicle and beckoned. "Neither of us will get any sleep this way. Let's walk."

He shrugged wearily. "Why not?"

They headed for the entrance. The tunnels of the complex were quiet, with an occasional distant voice or clink of a tool indicating not everyone had retired. They passed the door of super-hard metal which would probably have resisted every attempt at being forced, if not for a simple lever operator behind a hinged panel in the door's center. There were faint burn marks, where a laser torch had been used in a fruitless attempt to collect a sample for analysis.

As she had done under the wreck on another world, Duschesne trailed her fingers across the ancient metal. "Looks as if they had about as much success as the team back on Kurilik. I wonder if it's the same material?"

"Probably. On the other hand, the universe allows a lot of solutions."

They emerged into the open. The sky flickered and rumbled with the electrical activity of a retreating storm, although overhead the stars were brilliant. Everything was dripping wet, so they remained in the cleared area near the entrance and leaned companionably against a parked floater.

"Remember when you first took me on?" Duschesne asked.

"You were young, brash and over qualified. Of course I remember."

"Now I am older, not so brash, and wondering if I will ever be qualified for the job you stuck me with."

"You did not have to take it," he pointed out.

"How many applied?"

"Two were thinking about it. I persuaded them it would not be a good idea."

Startled, Duschesne stared at him. "I am only going to say this once."

"Say what?"

"DJ, you are a rat!"

He considered. "How about old rat?"

"Older. Not old."

"Nice distinction. Anyway, I accept the reprimand."

The woman smiled. "Not only are you older, you are definitely wiser."

For a few minutes Taylor and his successor watched the distant flickering of the storm. He liked to think of Duschesne as the daughter he never had, although there were moments — such as this — when he wished the relationship was something more.

"You are pensive," she said.

"I am thinking about the Quizzies."

She sighed. "Of course."

"If they were responsible for both the Kurilik ship and—" His gesture encompassed the planet. "—it follows that in comparison we humans are not much better than intelligent monkeys. Right?"

She frowned. "That is the second time you have mentioned monkeys. Go on."

"Yet the maze and the use of test animals suggests an approach which even by our standards is primitive." Taylor stared thoughtfully into the night. "Therefore a question. Are we dealing with two races?"

"One," she said after a moment.

"Why?"

"Because Hawkins could only communicate using a computer interface. Because Einstein was probably a lousy cook, although he was a passable violinist. Because Newton was an arrogant S.O.B., and because Hector Gesuvanov conceived his success equations while he was serving time for nearly killing his common-law wife. In other words, former boss-of-mine, no one is perfect."

Suddenly Duschesne laughed aloud. "What is wrong with being a smart monkey anyway? Perhaps the Quizzies were merely smart lizards!"

10 It turned out the maze was not the only evidence the Quizzies were testing for intelligence as well as longevity. In another small group of chambers around the curve of the complex, a team found a stack of small transparent boxes (cages?) with toggle-operated combination locks on the inside. There was also a similar picture gallery. Duschesne, Alice Briossi and the always irritating Benjamin Goodacre soon arrived on the scene.

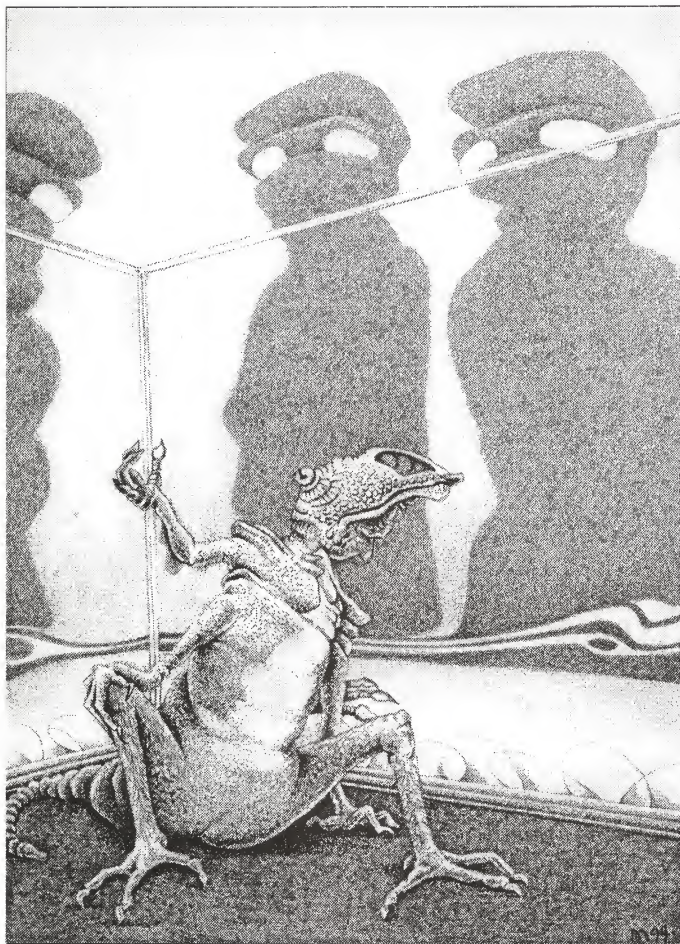
As in the life extension lab the pictures were in pairs, with the same vertical graduations separating each pair. The animals were the familiar six-legged species. The first picture of each pair showed an animal inside a box, with a small bowl of food outside. The second picture was always of an empty open box and an empty bowl of food.

"Just like the maze," Briossi commented. "Task and incentive."

Goodacre said lecturnally, "There are three toggles. So if all three have to be pressed in a specific sequence to open the box, then there are six possible combinations. Right? Now if—"

"Memory!" Duschesne said loudly, cutting off Goodacre's pomposity in mid sentence. "The creature would probably starve to death if all it could do was press the toggles at random. So it has to remember each failed sequence so as not to repeat it." Unable to resist the temptation, she added, "Right?"

"Right," Taylor said as he entered the chamber. He



had his hand in the open base of one of the boxes. "Didn't take long to figure it out." He pressed the toggles. "Three, one, two, bingo!" The front of the box fell open. "Fairly easy for a child, not so easy for a dumb animal."

"Unless the Quizzies found a way to make the animal less dumb," Briossi muttered as she examined a small panel the others had missed. She beckoned. "Look at this."

There were only two pairs of pictures. The first picture of each pair was the same; an animal in a box with a bowl of food outside. Only the slightly different posture of the creature indicated the pictures were not duplicates of the same original. In the pair at the top of the panel, the pictures were separated by dozens of close vertical graduations. In the second picture of that pair, what was inside the box was obviously dead.

"A placebo test," the planetologist murmured. "You were right, Duschesne. The poor little beast starved to death before it could figure a way

"But not this one." Taylor was examining the bottom pair, in which the second picture was of an empty cage and bowl. He pointed. "If the graduations do represent time, this particular animal was not caged long enough to lose its appetite."

Duschesne glanced around the gallery, then back to the panel. "I would not be surprised if this is a summary of decades of work."

"Perhaps even centuries," B90's retired director suggested *sotto* voice.

11 Briossi asked, "What is your opinion of a scientist who has his results translated into pictures even illiterates can understand?"

Taylor frowned. "I'd say he is not merely satisfied with communicating his accomplishments to his peers. He wants the whole damn universe to know—present and future."

"If I did that, people would label me as arrogant."

"Perhaps Quizzies were not so much arrogant," Bhinamji suggested, "as innocent."

"What the hell does that mean?" Goodacre's ill-concealed hostility against his Asian superior made Duschesne wonder if the man was a closet racist.

The small woman answered calmly, "It means the Quizzies cared only about immediate goals, not long-term consequences."

"A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing," Taylor translated sourly. "Cliché, but I have never had cause to argue the point."

Bhinamji continued, "To seek to live a little longer and think a little better, is entirely laudable. But to aim for godhood? That is a task best left for the gods I think. The Quizzies tried, and who knows they may have come close. But where are they now?"

Briossi said, "There are a couple in that ship on Kurilik."

12 The planetologist obviously enjoyed the effect of her bombshell. She held up a hand to calm the excited questions. "Elby just relayed a message from Eldon Regehr. His people uncovered a hatch on the ship's underside and have removed enough rock to allow one of them to squeeze inside. The remains are pretty well desiccated of course, although they are, as Luin suspected, of a tall and slender people."

Duschesne muttered, "But to be so intact—"

"Like the ship itself, you mean?"

"The impact should have splattered them like a thick coat of organic paint!"

The older woman shrugged. "The technology which kept the ship intact obviously did the same for them. But it didn't save them from slamming into the planet, did it?"

Luin Bhinamji said, "The crash could have been deliberate."

Taylor's gray eyebrows rose. "Suicide?"

Shoulders moved in a delicate shrug. "The bodies and the ship are intact because of superior technology. Superior technology implies superior fail-

safe. Therefore, the crash occurred only because those on board wished it so. Perhaps they self-terminated before the ship began its final dive."

13 The explosions occurred while Briossi, Duschesne and Taylor were away from the complex on a search for specimens with a possible Terrestrial origin.

Although none of the three were botanists, they would have been delighted at the sight of anything with an Earthly flower, even a humble dandelion. Yet the variety they did see was astonishing, ranging from brilliant yellow five-meter blossoms, to microscopic flowers clinging to exposed surfaces like multi-colored tinsel. Briossi even thought she caught a glimpse of a sparrow-like bird as it vanished into a barbed thicket. After spending the best part of an hour in an attempt to find their way around the thicket's formidable defenses, they finally gave up and headed back.

"Let's face it, it was just an excuse to get out from under for a while," Taylor said cheerfully as he tried

**"The Quizzies
tried, and
who knows
they may
have come
close."**

not too successfully to steer the floater clear of the dripping vegetation which frequently sprayed them from the sides of the trail. "Trying to recognize terrestrial flora among this lot is fantasy anyway."

Briossi chuckled. "Our mutual ignorance is duly noted. I suppose we need a team of botanists with expertise ranging from Earth's tundras to the tropics." Her bony face creased into a sardonic smile. "But being of a practical turn of mind, I would rather go with the cheaper and scientifically useless alternative."

"Which is?"

"Have random samples shipped to Earth on a regular basis. When this mega-effort peters out, as sooner or later it is bound to, it will be like putting a burr in the money tap. Even when the tap is turned off, a trickle keeps coming through."

"Clever—" Duschesne began. Her words turned into a gasp as they topped the final rise and saw what appeared to be the entire complement milling around outside the alien complex. As they headed down the slope, a helijet lifted off and turned in the direction of Elby. Taylor brought the floater to a rocking stop at the edge of the crowd.

Briossi called, "What is going on?"

"Explosions," a disheveled woman said. She pointed toward the entrance. "In there."

"Anyone hurt?"

"Two people were just flown to Elby for treatment. They'll be OK, although one person was not so lucky."

"Oh god." With astonishing agility Briossi jumped out of the floater and grabbed the woman's shoulders. "Who? Tell me!"

Seeing the woman wince with pain, Duschesne and Taylor tried to separate the two. But Briossi, who seemed to be operating on hysterical strength, fought like a madwoman. "Tell me," she screeched as she was finally dragged back. "Tell me!"

The woman rubbed her sore shoulders. "It was Dev von Gurandais. He's dead."

Briossi made a small noise. Then she collapsed.

14 The doctor pulled a sheet over the body. "The stroke was massive. Nothing could have been done."

"But that doesn't make sense." Duschesne was angry and wanted answers. "Alice would not have been allowed here without a clean bill of health!"

"There are limits you know, especially for a person of her age. The exertion of those last few moments, plus the shock of losing her friend—" The doctor shrugged. "As I said, there are limits."

It was a subdued group who were waiting when

the helijet later returned to pick up this further casualty of the disaster. But the flight which carried Alice Briossi's remains on the first leg of the journey which would end with an honored burial in her Italian homeland, also brought her temporary replacement. Cyberneticist Werner Slessinger, short, somewhat overweight and clearly nervous, was effusively grateful for the presence of the Bureau Ninety heavyweights.

"I know my place is on Elby, but they can muddle along while I find out what happened to Alice." Slessinger's brown eyes moistened. "I liked the lady."

Duschesne said sympathetically, "It was a stroke. The explosions, her friend's death—"

"No!" The cyberneticist's denial was vigorous. "A couple of months ago I had to tell her that her only son had been murdered by some hop-head in Paris. She thanked me, locked herself in her quarters for a couple of hours, then came out and acted as if nothing had happened. What she did not do was turn berserk!"

"So what are you suggesting, Mr. Slessinger? There was another reason for her behavior?"

Slessinger said defiantly, "Damn right I am!"

The doctor pulled a sheet over the body. "The stroke was massive."

15 "Where did it happen?" Slessinger asked as they arrived in the room where Alice Briossi recently presided at what no one expected would be her last meeting.

Taylor pointed at a wall map of the complex on which a location was marked with a heavy circle. "In what we think was the Quizzies life extension

lab."

"Do you mind showing me?"

Taylor exchanged a quick glance with Duschesne. He knew she needed time to prepare a report on the tragedy, so accepted her brief nod. "Of course."

With Slessinger almost trotting to match the taller man's strides, Taylor led the way to the lab. Although most of the picture panels in the outer chamber were blown over and scorch marks of the explosion were visible everywhere, there was remarkably little damage considering the force of the blast. Taylor nodded toward a corner in which the walls and floor had already been scrubbed. "They were found over there."

Slessinger bit his lip. "I saw them carried off in the helijet. A mess."

"Merkin and Dressler will be OK. I understand you have a pretty good clinic on Elby, although Dressler will undoubtedly have to go to Earth to get eye transplants."

"Devon didn't make it."

"Neither did Alice," Taylor pointed out, watching

the other closely.

The cyberneticist blinked and wiped his eyes. "No." He turned to his guide. "What were they doing here?"

"Merkin and Dressler were showing the deputy administrator around the complex. I understand it was his first visit here."

"Buy why now and why the secrecy? On Elby, we didn't even know he was gone!"

"No?" The older man frowned. "Had he done this kind of thing before?"

"Never. Devon took his duties seriously, especially with Alice away. It was completely uncharacteristic."

"Then is it possible—?" After a moment's hesitation, Taylor mused, "He must have had a reason."

"Obviously," Slessinger agreed unhelpfully. "What about the second explosion?"

"This way." They picked their way over broken panels into the chamber where the cylinder was located. Shattered pieces of flasks and equipment were strewn on wrecked shelving and on the floor. Although scorched, the cylinder and its pedestal appeared intact.

Taylor watched the other rub the cylinder's surface. The blast smudges came off easily, exposing the pristine white—

Click. A small draw extended from the side of the cylinder.

Slessinger flinched back. "Sorry, I didn't—"

"Don't apologize," Taylor said as he peered over Slessinger's shoulder. "We have been trying to do that for days."

Inside the drawer, a tiny vial contained a grayish liquid. Minuscule markings rimmed one end of the tiny container. "Don't touch it," Taylor warned.

"Of course not. I wouldn't think—"

"But keep looking."

"Keep looking?" A broadening smile. "Right!" Slessinger promptly began to rub and poke other parts of the cylinder. Within seconds he clicked open two other drawers, each also containing a vial. Taylor found another. The rest of the cylinder resisted their probing.

"Maybe the explosion jarred something." Flexing aching fingers, the younger man added hopefully, "But only four? Looks like there should be more."

Taylor nodded. "Presuming there is a drawer below each of those inscriptions, there are ninety-two more."

16 Nearly everyone had gathered in the big central chamber. After introducing herself and Taylor, and announcing that as direc-

tor of Bureau Ninety she was assuming control of all security matters as well as the sabotage investigation, Janine Duschesne continued,

"I think we can reasonably assume that what happened was not an act of deliberate murder, but an attempt to destroy whatever knowledge the Quizzies left behind. The victims had the bad luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time—yes, Mr. Slessinger?"

The cyberneticist lowered his hand, "Then the purpose of the saboteur was the same as the deputy administrator's. Devon felt very strongly that the complex should be resealed and One-Seven-Three embargoed."

A brief, shocked silence was followed by a chorus of questions and angry comments. Even the normally phlegmatic Luin Bhinamji was on her feet, although her thin voice was lost in the noise.

Duschesne waited until she could be heard. "How many of you knew about this?"

"Just Alice and me. Even as teams were opening up the complex, Devon told us of his feelings. I remember he used the term 'Pandora's Box.' Alice thought he was overreacting, and told him so."

"What did he say to that?"

"Not much. He knew from the start he would be outvoted anyway."

"Then could he—?" Duschesne began tentatively, then shook her head. "No way. The man was a victim, not the saboteur. In any case he had only just got here, so had neither time or opportunity."

"Then find out who had access to the plastique," Mai Huan, materials specialist, suggested reasonably.

"From general stores?" Taylor shook his head. "Anyone could have gone in there and smuggled out a couple of mini-charges along with a set of micropliers or a case of frozen vegetables." Bearded lips creased in a humorless smile. "After all, why bother with security? Scientists invent bombs, they don't use them."

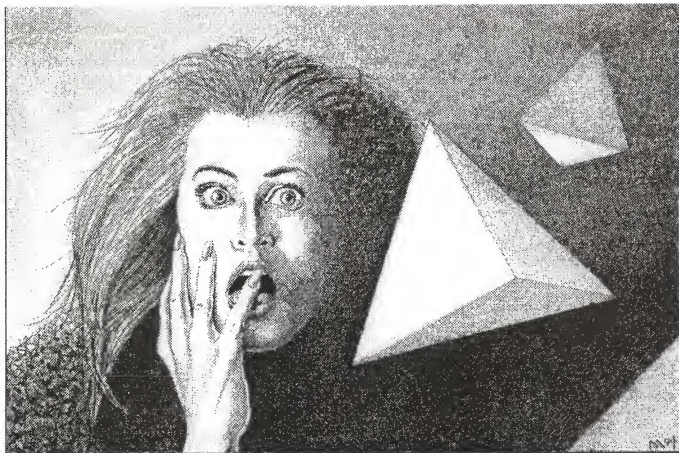
It was a deliberate shot which had its intended effect. Like chastised children, some of his audience stared uncomfortably at the floor. After a moment:

"May I make a suggestion, please?"

Taylor looked across at Goodacre. The tragedy had apparently shocked much of the arrogance out of the little engineer, whose hand was politely raised. "Yes, Ben?"

"Presuming the guilty party is still among us, perhaps we should rearrange the schedules so no one works alone. It may even be a good idea to organize ourselves into teams of three."

"Hmmm. That might be worth consid—"



Taylor was interrupted by an unbelieving shout over the PA. *"There are things coming out of the sky! Thousands of them!"*

There was a concerted dash toward the main tunnel.

17 When Duschesne and Taylor finally reached the entrance and pushed through the crowd into the daylight, the sky was filled with glittering points of light drifting downward with the gentle aimless motion of falling leaves in still air. Despite its apparent randomness, neither of them doubted this was not a natural phenomenon.

One of the points of light drifted close and hovered, revealing itself as a crystalline four-sided pyramid about two centimeters across. It uttered a plaintive *beep?* and when the astonished watchers failed to respond, the strange little object drifted away. It was the first and last sound heard from any of the strange visitors.

Another of the pyramids shot forward toward the entrance. The movement was so sudden no one had time to react, as dozens of other pyramids followed, each neatly zig-zagging past humans and parked floaters. The only noise was the whistle of their passage through the air, like diminutive banshees.

After interminable moments during which even the optimists found themselves contemplating the imminence of life's end, everyone uncringed and

looked up cautiously toward where thousands of the objects had stopped their aimless drifting and were circling like a flock of birds looking for a place to roost. Every few seconds a group peeled away and accelerated in a different direction over the island. Finally the sky was clear, although as Duschesne lowered her gaze, she glimpsed a bright flash as something whistled across a gap in the vegetation to her right.

"What are they?" someone whispered.

"It's an invasion!" Slessinger's face was white and frightened as his eyes darted about him. "We'll never get off this island alive!"

He could have been right. But as minutes passed and no attack materialized, nerves began to relax — and tensed up again as a single pyramid re-emerged from the complex. In quick jerky movements it flitted from person to person, in each case stopping for a moment until it moved on. After it completed its survey, the pyramid shot up vertically a few meters and hovered. Then it shot up again until it was reduced to a glittering speck. Suddenly it was the target of dozens of other bright specks hurtling toward it from all directions. Duschesne barely managed a gasp before all the specks met—

18 The woman released her held breath. "Nothing?" she wondered unsteadily. "Not even a flash and a bang?"

Taylor was still examining the bright and empty

sky. "Complete matter and energy absorption. How the hell did they do that?"

"Perhaps they transferred," Bhinamji suggested. "Transferred?" Taylor frowned. "Like to some other—" He hesitated. "—place?"

The anthropologist bobbed her dark head in acquiescence. "They obviously went somewhere."

"In which case the little dear is probably at this moment reporting to its superiors." Duschesne's solemn expression belied the facetiousness of her words. "What is it telling them, I wonder? That we have been examined and judged of minor importance?"

"Examined, yes. That we were judged unimportant? Somehow I doubt that." Taylor could not keep his eyes off the sky. "But this is a brand new situation. Although those things have not harmed us, I suggest caution from now on."

Duschesne counted her companions. All twenty-nine, plus Slessinger were present. "DJ, I certainly agree about the caution. Please make sure everyone stays put while I check out the complex."

"You can't do that," Taylor said, holding her back. "You forget you are the General now, not a soldier. So send—" A hand rose. "—Ephram and perhaps one other."

As a grinning Ephram Elofsson stepped out of the crowd, a gamut of emotions including annoyance, resignation and finally humor, flitted across Duschesne's face. "DJ, you are a pain," she said pleasantly as she looked around. She pointed. "How about you, Ben?"

Goodacre would have preferred that it be someone else. But more afraid of ridicule than what he tried to convince himself was only a modest hazard, he was inside the entrance even before Elofsson. Slowly the two men edged their way down the tunnel. Occasionally a pyramid zipped from one side chamber into another, and once one shot right between them as it went about its mysterious business. Otherwise the tiny artifacts ignored them.

"I wish I knew what they are and what they are up to," Goodacre muttered.

"It is what we are in here to find out, isn't it?" Elofsson asked cheerfully. Unlike his nervous companion, he was enjoying himself.

When they reached the big central chamber, only a few pyramids were visible. Some were merely hovering, others flitted between stops with a jerkiness resembling the Brownian movement of particles in a fluid.

"Perhaps they are part of an automatic system left

behind by the Quizzies." Goodacre blinked at the floating crystals. "But what triggered it?"

"I think—" Gesturing for the others to follow him, the archaeologist trotted toward the life extension lab. "Let's look anyway."

There were dozens of pyramids in the small room; a few drifting in their usual erratic fashion, others stationary. Most were clustered around the scorched central cylinder and the four drawers Taylor and Slessinger had opened.

The pyramids flitted politely aside as the two humans approached. As Elofsson peered into a drawer and saw the vial it contained, he had an uncomfortable feeling he was being scrutinized. Biting his lip, he forced himself not to touch the vial. Although the pyramids did not physically react, he sensed intense disappointment.

Confused, he hurriedly stepped back. The disappointment faded.

Elofsson took a deep breath. "Did you feel that?"

Goodacre tugged at his arm. "Let's get out of here!"

"Yes, let's." The two men edged cautiously out of the lab, then turned and ran up the tunnel. The pyramids did not follow.


Outside, with breathless interruptions from Goodacre, Elofsson described what had happened.

After a quick conference with Taylor and Bhinamji, Duschesne announced: "Doctor Taylor and I are going in. Luin, please have everyone follow in groups of no more than three at five minute intervals. If we find we can function despite the presence of those things, starting tomorrow the work will continue as before."

Bhinamji inclined her dark head. "I agree. But with the presence of those objects, I suspect it will not be easy to concentrate on our work."

19 To Duschesne's relief, the reoccupation took place without incident. Insisting he had already been away from his regular duties too long, Werner Slessinger summoned the helijet from Elby. Refusing to follow the others into the complex, he waited outside. Before dark, dignity barely intact, he was gone.

But as activities resumed, everyone was soon reminded of Bhinamji's warning. By itself, the pyramids' physical ubiquitousness was something one could learn to tolerate, as individuals in security-sensitive environments learn to tolerate the omnipresence of electronic surveillance. But the constant, irritating emoting was something else, and within hours


**The pyramids
flitted
politely aside
as the two
humans
approached.**

Duschesne was forced to shut everything down and call another meeting.

It would have been less crowded in the big central chamber. But the comforting proximity of the nervous participants to each other within the closer confines of Administration, somehow evened the odds against the few pyramids which drifted in. Noticeably, they were not emoting.

"Perhaps our little watchers have decided to behave themselves," Taylor commented.

Duschesne looked up at the floating crystals. "So let's take advantage while it lasts. Luin, will you start?"

Not given to an excess of words, the dark woman simply said, "The pyramids emote just two moods. Expectation and disappointment."

Duschesne nodded. "A sort of binary 'yes-no,' as if they are trying to point us to something."

"That is my guess," Taylor fingered his beard. "But point us to what?"

"And why aren't they emoting now?" Elofsson wondered.

"Probably because at this moment we are not considering the basic purpose of the complex." Luin sighed and shook her head. "It is ironic, isn't it? If they are here to point us to something, then they are defeating their purpose by their presence. They are a total distraction!"

Taylor's mouth twitched. "So true. It would give me great joy to know they are capable of frustration."

Electronicist Zedra Hirato was a large woman with voice to match. "What about our frustrations? What do we do to chase these nags back where they came from?"

"Learn to ignore them!" Taylor retorted; his beard bristling as he glared at Hirato, who glared back. "Instead of swatting at shadows, we must get across the message that we will only do things our way and not—" He jerked his thumb upward. "—theirs!"

Duschesne frowned. "What good will that do?"

"Confuse the opposition, I hope." Taylor glanced up at the silent watchers. "If the Quizzies are no longer around because of some colossal error perpetrated in this facility, it might explain why their proxies are so interested in what *we* are doing. Right?"

"The vials—" Benjamin Goodacre began.

"Obviously core to this whole thing, they have been duly catalogued and removed. Those, and any other vials we find, will remain sealed until properly qualified people can examine them."

"Qualified in what?" someone asked.

Duschesne could not resist the temptation. "We are not qualified to answer that," she said ingeniously.

The pyramids were not deterred by the pretense not to notice them. As exploration of the complex and the island continued, the presence of what were now referred to as the "companions" had such a stultifying effect the work seriously suffered. It is difficult to be creative, or even to think at all, when swarms of crystalline busybodies are emoting intense anticipation or disappointment in reaction to simple search procedures such as tapping walls. And when discoveries were made despite projections of disappointment (emphasizing the single-mindedness of the companions), accomplishment was inevitably overwhelmed by frustration.

"The little bastards don't want us to do anything except what *they* want us to do!" geologist Rhiddian Macallister complained during one of the too-frequent meetings in Administration. In terms of

the discussion of mutual problems, answers were infrequent. But only in here and the sleeping cubicles did the companions cease their nagging emanations. "If I had a baseball bat, I'd use it on a few of 'em — if it would do any good!"

Taylor asked, "What do you think the companions want us to do anyway?"

"Hell, we've tiptoed around that subject often enough. They want us to complete what the Quizzies started."

"And what is that? Intelligence enhancement? Life extension?" The former Bureau Ninety director spread his hands. "But the Quizzies have not been around for a few million years. What is

the point?"

Macallister shouted angrily, "How the hell do I know? But I'd still like to use that damn bat!"

20 When Benjamin Goodacre made his discovery, he was not officially on duty. Otherwise he would have had to share the startling knowledge with his assigned partner. So with the encouragement of a whole bevy of companions, he thought and acted in a hurry.

His plan was brazen. It was also unworkable. Or at least it would have been to anyone not quite as desperate as this man, who for most of his life had been convinced he was the object of a universal conspiracy to demean him. That his clandestine activities remained unnoticed, was merely the kind of unremarkable coincidence which centuries before had prompted the poet's observation *fools may walk where angels fear to tread*, and sometimes live long enough to brag about it.

Meanwhile there was a flurry of excitement at the

**"What do we
do to chase
these nags
back where
they came
from?"**

news from Kurilik that the ship was finally available for detailed inspection. Duschesne immediately returned to Elby and arranged a T-wave audiovisual hookup with R.U.3's administrator. On the screen, Eldon Regehr opened a folder and displayed several photographs.

"My first impression was the unremarkability of the control cabin, from the layout of its displays to the three acceleration couches. My second impression was the apparent lack of damage. As you can see, the back bulkhead is slightly misaligned and that floor bulge was obviously not in the original spec."

"Controls?"

"Nothing recognizable, although there are extensive electronics in the headrest of the right seat. We suspect the ship was piloted by direct mental command from whoever occupied that seat. The other two seats are for passengers; the displays presumably for their benefit."

"So the electronics are pretty advanced?"

"Enough that no one can even begin to figure them out." A thin smile. "So far anyway."

"What about the drive?"

The smile became a grimace. "What we put in a three-meter cube, the Quizzies put in a shoe-box. A lot of people are lusting to get their hands on that item."

"The crew?"

Regehr produced another set of pictures. "Taken before the remains were removed for examination."

Occupying the center and the right-hand couches, there were skeletons enclosed in leather. The flesh was gone, and what once was skin was now brittle parchment. The almost spherical skulls sported three pronounced ridges running sideways across the top. Elongated eye sockets reached around the sides of each skull, and there were parallel sets of bony plates where humans had teeth. The rib cage was proportionately large, arms and legs multi-jointed and long. Three-fingered hands each with two opposed thumbs. Also—

"My god, they're holding hands!"

Regehr's screen image nodded. "Poignant, isn't it? We romantics have already decided they are male and female."

"Anything else?"

"Something quite interesting. Look closely at this enlargement—"

administrator. When the playback reached Regehr's request to have her examine an enlargement of a Quizzly skull, she cut off the sound and used a light pointer on the monitor.

"See those blemishes? They are areas where the bone is as brittle as burned wood. Except for the perfection of the ship's counter inertial-fields at impact, even a couple of residual Gs would have forced the gray matter right through the fronts of their heads!" She added sadly, "I suspect the poor souls were amateurs who underestimated the capabilities of their ship. They probably did not expect, or want, their remains to be protected so well."

"Why would they care?" Taylor asked. "Unless their plan was to ensure that whatever was killing them would also die with them."

Duschesne had a strange, almost wistful expression on her face as she said softly, "Perhaps they were among the last of their kind. And for what they obviously meant to each other, as well as for their attempt to protect those who might follow, I admire them."

Taylor shook his head. "Nice sentiments. But that does not tell us why they were sick in the first place."

"So?"

"Look, we already have evidence of the thoroughness of the Quizzies' work. So presuming they made a breakthrough, perhaps in some kind of longevity treatment, they would have tested the hell out of it before they administered it to anyone, let alone the entire race!"

"Immortality," Duschesne muttered. "But perhaps not quite." After a moment, "It does look like a degenerative disease, doesn't it?"

Taylor nodded. "To put it mildly."

"So what if the disease was a side effect triggered after a few centuries of a healthy, extended life span? My God, DJ, the horror of it. The despair!"

"Very sad," Bhinamji agreed in her understated way. She added, "But I agree with DJ and find it difficult to imagine the use of any treatment without an extended series of tests. So I must also agree that the Quizzies evolved too fast and too easily. For such a species, problems would not exist beyond their immediate horizon."

"A race of chronic optimists." The man frowned. "Is such a concept conceivable?"

"God knows," Duschesne sighed, although in her heart she suspected Bhinamji was right. If the Quizzies had indeed succeeded in their quest for superiority of mind and near immortality of body, it had been at a terrible price. During indefinitely extended

**The flesh was
gone, and
what once
was skin was
now brittle
parchment.**

21 After Duschesne returned to 173, she met with Taylor and Bhinamji and ran a playback of her conversation with the R.U.3

life spans, they enjoyed a level of health and soaring mentality perhaps a thousand generations beyond their time. Then the unexpected dissolution; an extended, agonizing process tragically culminated aboard the ship hidden for geological ages under Kurilik's desert. She hoped the two beings never knew of the failure of their attempt to guard the future from the consequence of their race's catastrophic error.

Perhaps also there had been Quizzies who did not think as the lovers aboard the ship, who in contrast were so consumed by rage at their fate—

Is it the companions' malevolent function to lead us along the same deadly road?

Duschesne rubbed a hand across her eyes. Her head ached.

And why do they sometimes behave like observers? To whom, or what, do they report? Where?

"When?" she whispered.

22 A white eyebrow rose inquiringly. "When?"
"Do either of you give credence to time travel?"

Taylor was disconcerted by the unexpected nature of the question and hesitated with his answer. In contrast, Bhinamji simply asked, "Why not? Time is the least understood of all the dimensions." A sardonic smile. "I suspect, Director Duschesne of Bureau Ninety, I have given you an answer you would rather not hear. Is that not so?"

"Well, I—" Uncharacteristically, Duschesne also found herself at a loss for words.

Her predecessor was the first to recover. "So if the Quizzies are using us to correct their mistakes, the companions must be their tools through time!" He frowned. "With that kind of technology, wouldn't it make more sense to adjust the known past rather than the unknown future?"

Duschesne found her tongue. "You know the answer to that one, DJ. From killing your own grandfather, to breaking a twig which may prevent the founding of an empire, manipulating the past has the potential to be a cure worse than any disease. But what harm can come to the present by manipulating the future? Especially if that manipulation can save the present!"

Taylor began doubtfully, "Which does make a screwy kind of sense—" His eyes brightened. "OK, so the Quizzies left pictures to make it easy for us to figure out what they were doing, and the companions to influence us as well as to report back to—" He shrugged. "—whenever. But why was it so difficult to open the drawers in that cylinder? If it was an over-

sight capable of correction, then surely the companions could have—"

He gasped.

23 Bhinamji was through the door before Duschesne and Taylor had time to exchange astonishment and then ran after her. In the life extension lab, they found the small woman already at the cylinder, fingering its surface. Even as they watched, another drawer slid open in response to her probing fingers.

Strangely there were no companions present, although they had seen several as they ran through the big central chamber. Duschesne and Taylor began working on other parts of the cylinder, finding that a simple touch against each symbol caused a drawer to open.

It was not long before the previously smooth surface bristled with open drawers.

Six were empty.

Bhinamji touched Taylor's arm and pointed. "Those are the four you and Werner Slessinger opened. But why are vials missing from two others?"

"Why indeed," Duschesne whispered. "And why are the symbols above those two drawers bigger with bolder characters? Last time I was here, all the symbols were the same size!"

"And nothing opened this easily either." Taylor concealed his frustration behind a studied calm.

"So perhaps the Quizzies made a few changes for us," Bhinamji said.

Taylor smiled thinly. "Nice of them."

"Alright!" Frustrated and angry, Duschesne began pacing. "So from three million years ago, the Quizzies just gave us a helping hand! But why did they bother? So we can be their guinea pigs across time, picking up where they left off? That if we survive, they do — or did? Have you considered the implications of that? Because of what we are supposed to do, *did* they survive? If so, where are they? If not, is it because we will make the same mistakes, and by our own extinction prove there is no hope anyway?" She added with disgust, "I am tempted to evacuate this place and order sterilization of the whole bloody island!"

"Not before we have recovered those missing vials," Taylor said mildly.

24 "Why didn't we realize her guilt before this?"
"Probably because we preferred not to think of her that way."

The B90 director sighed. "A single gray hair where

**"I am tempted
to evacuate
this place and
order
sterilization
of the island!"**

it was not supposed to be. You can't argue with DNA."

"That's right."

Duschesne and Taylor were strolling along a trail near the complex. The walk was a temporary respite, but a welcome one as they sought a few minutes to themselves.

The woman continued, "No wonder Alice had a fit when she discovered she had killed a friend and almost killed two others! But what convinced her to do what she did? Even her deputy administrator was unaware she felt that way."

Taylor tucked her arm within his. "Gurandais only wanted the place sealed, not destroyed. I suspect Alice had already made up her mind a more permanent solution was necessary and sought the first available opportunity."

"Our arrival."

"It was the perfect excuse to come with us to One-Seven-Three."

"Yes." A companionable silence.

"Too bad she screwed up," Taylor continued after a moment. "After all, her heart was in the right place."

The woman squeezed his arm. "I wish she had seen the companions. Their existence might even have changed her mind."

He grimaced. "Or caused her to attempt to destroy the whole complex. In any case—" He hesitated. "It was probably the explosions which attracted them in the first place."

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"It seems ironic that although we can deduce the psychology of a people who lived three million years ago, no one twigged to Alice's vulnerability."

"Why would we?" Duschesne asked. She added bleakly, "You forget Elby's state of mind was never the subject of a mega-credit scientific investigation!"

25 Bhinamji was waiting for them at the entrance to the complex. "Have either of you seen Ben Goodacre?"

Taylor frowned. "Not recently."

"He has been missing for most of the day. He was last seen leaving the complex with a small container."

Duschesne's stomach sank. "The missing vials?" she whispered.

"I suspect so."

"But that is—" Remembering the altered symbols above the empty fifth and sixth drawers, Duschesne knew time had almost run out. "We need bodies. Now!"

Quickly people were gathered, instructions issued. Search parties fanned out through the complex and across the immediate area of the island. Any doubts Duschesne was overreacting were soon put aside when someone thought to check the test animals imported from Elby after the original four vials were found. Offi-

cially no experiments had yet been sanctioned, and the rats seemed content within their enclosures.

Except four were missing.

Three small corpses were found discarded in a corner of a disused chamber. Teeth were bared in a rictus of pain, bodies wracked and twisted as if every muscle had spasmed at once. The fourth animal was not found. But its droppings were, in a Quizzzy puzzle cage found close by. The front of the cage was open.

"So Ben was not completely stupid," was Taylor's initial reaction.

Hector Serple, biologist and physician, shrugged. "One live smart rat, does not success make."

"What do you think the drugs will do to him?" Bhinamji asked.

"Who knows? With luck, very little." Serple's lips curled with contempt, "But I hope the little bastard contracts a king-sized dose of dysentery!"

Duschesne said thoughtfully, "Two vials. How much to take and in what order? Not a decision I would care to make."

Taylor nodded. "Especially with only four test animals. Even if the fourth test was successful, that still leaves pretty long odds for a human — unless the stuff is pretty tolerant."

"What if Ben does become super-human?" Duschesne wondered.

Serple grinned. "I doubt that will happen. But if he does, I suppose we will have to watch him for a century or two." The grin became a grimace. "If we can find him, that is."

Duschesne said thoughtfully, "Ben is undoubtedly the experiment now, the one on which the companions and their masters are concentrating."

"Probably. But how does that help?"

"Companions have performed their sky vanishing-trick so often since they arrived, we have become somewhat blasé about it. But we do know the main messenger rises vertically while his friends converge—"

"—so if we can find witnesses who can locate ground zero below the most recent event, we might just have Mr. Goodacre!" Taylor's face firmed into a grim mask. "On the other hand, Director Duschesne — Jan — do we really want to find him? I suggest you think about that."

After a moment, she whispered, "Are you sure you don't want your old job back?"

26 Benjamin Goodacre came out of hiding after his supplies ran out. He had seen the frequent helicopter flights to and from the island, and supposed they were bringing in more searchers. But the concealed cave proved its worth, protecting him long enough he could now emerge and face those who condemned him merely because of a

scrawny exterior which was no fault of his own.

The first days after he took the mixture were so filled with pain (*Why hadn't the fourth rat suffered before it finally figured how to open the cage?*), he even considered ending it on the jagged rocks below the cave. Only his innate cowardice and the silent encouragement of the companions saved him. That was the day many of them rose into the sky, merged and vanished. And then the pain began to recede — to the extent he could eat and even miss the companionship of other humans.

Nevertheless he prudently remained in the vicinity of the cave, until the blazing clarity of his thoughts and his sense of well-being fully convinced him that Benjamin Goodacre was indeed the first superman.

He supposed that after he returned home he would be isolated for a while, prodded, poked and subjected to interminable questions. But it was a small price for what would come after he emerged into public life: a hero who had dared the unthinkable and survived. And as he grew even smarter and became the friend and mentor of scientists and world leaders, he might even control his repugnance enough to consider a state visit to Bhinamji's home country.

As the little man descended the hill toward the complex, the helijet lifted into the sky and vanished in the direction of Elby. When he emerged into the clearing before the massive entrance only dust was moving, still swirling and settling after its disturbance by the massive rotor. Items of clothing were scattered about the area where the aircraft had been.

Goodacre shouted, "Everyone! I'm back!"

There was no response. He trotted into the complex and shouted again. Although his voice echoed and reverberated through the tunnels, no one appeared. Increasingly apprehensive, Goodacre went further into the complex, peering into various side chambers as he went. A few companions drifted with him, but did not interfere. All the evidence of occupancy was here, from papers scattered on desktops to soiled worksuits ready for laundering.

But there were no people.

Close to panic, he ran to Administration. When he entered, red-faced and panting, it was semi-untidy as usual, with chairs pushed away from the cluttered conference table as if the occupants had stepped outside for a stretch and a chat. Only the desk assigned to Janine Duschene desk was clear, except for a single sheet of folded paper placed neatly in the center of the desktop. Near tears now, Goodacre picked up the paper

with trembling fingers, opened it and read:
Ben.

Quite simply, what destroyed the Quizzies must not be allowed to do the same to us or any other sentients who share our universe. Everything to do with the Quizzies and their achievements, every scrap of evidence and what we accomplished with that evidence, must for the foreseeable future remain forbidden knowledge. It is why we will take no personal belongings or even the clothes on our backs. It is why you, Ben, and what is in your system, must remain.

We will not sterilize the planet, although that must remain an option. But an orbital weapons system will be programmed to destroy any ship which attempts to leave the surface. On the other hand, after appropriate warning, ships will be allowed to approach and land — although they will not be allowed to leave again. I hope that such an admittedly meager possibility of future companionship will assist your peace of mind.

You are being observed, of course, as we all were. Perhaps you are the successful experiment, and your success will save that civilization which existed so many millions of years ago. Whether or not the Quizzies did survive because of you is something we will probably never know. From this moment, anything pertaining to that race is pure speculation.

If you can get to Elby, you will find a helijet safely sequestered from the storms. It is a goal to strive for, and with your engineering skills I am sure you can contrive a boat strong enough and with a drive powerful enough to get you there. It is merely a suggestion, of course. What you will do with the years ahead, only you can decide.

Goodbye and good luck.

As he refolded the letter, Benjamin Goodacre said solemnly, "She wished me luck. How nice." He began to chuckle, then to laugh. The laughter took on a hysterical note, finally became an uncontrolled paroxysm.

Much later, Goodacre wiped the tears from his eyes and carefully replaced the letter on the desktop. A few companions watched, their diamond-surfaces reflecting streaks of light across the rock walls.

That is where the letter will stay, the only man on the island and soon-to-be the only man on the planet, solemnly decided.

Forever and forever.

27 And so Benjamin Goodacre began his one thousand year descent into hell... ■

**As the little
man
descended the
hill...the
helijet lifted
into the sky...**



POUL

Poul Anderson *could* be described as the winner of seven Hugo and three Nebula awards, the devoted father of a daughter married to another SF writer, the doting grandfather to two youngsters, and the life partner of Karen, his lover, wife and collaborator in written works and a fellow connoisseur of the best in science fiction literature and its readers. It is an honest description. But it would not catch the earnest young man born in Bristol, Pennsylvania, whose parents moved to Port Arthur, Texas, and from which place he moved when the most formative event of his life occurred.

His father died.

"Certainly, my father's premature death in an accident changed the course of my life. How differently it would have gone otherwise, I don't know.

"Actually, I was born in Pennsylvania, and it was only about six months later that a change in jobs by my father caused the family to move to Port Arthur, in southeast Texas. I spent the next eleven years there. After my father's death, my mother tried a couple of different places to live before settling down on a farm in Minnesota with my brother and me. I graduated from the University of Minnesota, and stayed on in Minneapolis for a few years, except for travels. However, it was then a much less interesting city than it

has since become; besides, those ghastly winters were getting to me. When Karen and I decided to get married, she too wanted to move, in her case from the Washington, D.C. area. I'd visited San Francisco and liked it, so we thought we'd try our luck thereabouts. We've been there, across the Bay, ever since.

"Of course, my childhood and youth influenced me and my writing. For one thing, they gave me much to write about. For another thing, they set my personality. Greg Bear, my son-in-law, says he never understood me till he read Garrison Keillor; now he twits me about my Minnesotan ways."

Wait. Back up from the marriage and the move to California. Minnesotan ways? That sounds interesting. How *did* you get started writing?

"As I said before, I graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's in physics. There was no money left for postgraduate studies, and a recession was going on, with jobs hard to find. Having sold a few stories while in college, and being unmarried, I thought I'd support myself by writing while I looked around for honest employment. The search was half-hearted and presently petered out. Meanwhile, when times got really hard, I'd get temporary jobs, such as soda jerk or making giant rabbits for parade floats. (Yes, indeed.) However,

these were strictly temporary. Mainly I continued as a writer, and gradually did better and better, until I could afford first to start taking lengthy trips abroad and later to get married.

"A few years after that marriage, it got really lean again. The market had contracted as never before or since. Having tried this and that, I landed a job as a very junior-grade chemist in an agricultural laboratory. This lasted about nine months, during which I wrote in evenings and on weekends. It kept us going, while the writing enabled us to pay off our debts and accumulate a stake. When it ended, I was ready to go back to being a full-time freelancer, and have been ever since.

"The upshot has been that the broad experience of the world that I urge all writers to get has not come my way through employment. I've had to go out and find it for myself. That may or may not be the best way."

Minnesota was also the start of something else — his early writing collaboration with Gordon R. Dickson. That partnership produced the books *Earthman's Burden*, *Hokai*, and *Star Prince Charlie*. How did it come about?

"In my bachelor days, when I was living in Minneapolis, Gordon Dickson and I were good friends who often got together. Story ideas sprang of themselves out of our conversations, and it was nat-

ANDERSON

ural to do some of them up as a joint enterprise. We'd talk about a story till we knew more or less what was going to happen. Then Gordy, who had the more inventive sense of humor, would write a first draft. I, who had perhaps a more meticulous mind, would do a rewrite, typing up loose ends and adding whatever bits of business occurred to me. Usually that sufficed. Working together was a lot of fun.

"I might add that every collaboration, like every marriage, is unique. Such others as I've been involved in have operated quite differently, each in its own way."

It may seem presumptuous to ask a man who has been writing and publishing for forty-five years *why* he writes, why he has produced over 90 novels and 300 short stories. But it is a fair question. And the one the fellow Texan in me could not resist. As always, Poul answered thoughtfully, forthrightly, and candidly.

"Once, many years ago when my daughter was maybe eight or nine, she brought back some homework from school. They'd read a short story in class and she was supposed to answer the usual inane questions about it. One was: 'What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this story?' Said she to me, with despair in her big blue eyes, 'I know what the author's purpose was, but how can I tell the

teacher?'

"Sure, I write for a living, the same as doctors and actors and scientists and sailors do what they do for a living. Like them, I necessarily sacrifice many things to the job that I would otherwise like to spend a lifespan on. It is not an easy occupation. It is, though, in the long run, a profoundly satisfying one. I am my own boss, I see the works grow beneath my own hands, and I communicate with a lot of different people. Sometimes their responses to this have led to unique experiences and abiding friendships."

That's fair. As far as pointing out that writers are workers too. But writing demands a distinctive creative impulse, something special. When did Poul Anderson first feel that special spark? "I was telling myself stories as far back as I can remember, and eventually began writing them down, just for my own eyes. Later, I got up the nerve to start submitting, and made my first sale when still in college. However, even then I was aiming to be a physicist, who might occasionally

moonlight as a writer. Only gradually did it dawn on me that writing was what nature had cut me out for."

But who helped along what nature had intended? Who was his mentor, if any? "My friend Neil Waldrop persuaded me to submit that first story which sold. In the course of conversation he'd given me so many ideas for it that I in

turn gave him half the byline and check. After that I was pretty much on my own, although members of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society, especially Gordon Dickson and I, did sort of cheer each other on."

Making money explains the need for a writer to write. But there must also be some joy in the writing. Something beyond commerce. What does he like most about being a

"Only gradually did it dawn on me that writing was what nature had cut me out for"

writer? Dislike most?

"Besides the advantages mentioned above, I like the sheer variety. I get to range through every field of knowledge and every activity that attracts me, as far as I am able to go, and in fact I often describe myself as a professional amateur. The seeming insecurity of a free-lancer's life is no

great bother; who is secure in his job, especially these days? Nobody can fire me!

"The down side in mainly, first, that I'd often rather be out hiking or sailing or whatever than sitting at a desk; second, that writing is hard work, especially the first draft. I sometimes say, only half in jest, that I don't actually like to write, I like to have written."

Written. That he has done ever since that first short story, "Tomorrow's Children," came out in the March 1947 *Astounding Science-Fiction*. Since then, he's published such memorable titles, some still to be found in libraries, as *Vault of the Ages* (Winston, 1952), *Three Hearts and Three Lions* (*Fantasy and Science Fiction* serial, 1953; Doubleday, 1961), *Brain Wave* (Ballantine, 1954), *The Broken Sword* (Abelard, 1954), *The Star Ways* (Avalon, 1957), *Virgin Planet* (Avalon, 1959), *Perish By The Sword* (Macmillan, 1959), *We Claim These Stars!* (Ace, 1959), *The High Crusade* (Doubleday, 1960), *Guardians of Time* (Ballantine, 1960), *Mayday Orbit* (Ace, 1961), *Shield* (Berkley, 1963), *The Corridors Of Time* (Doubleday, 1965), *Agent of the Terran Empire* (Chilton, 1965), *Flandry of Terra* (Chilton, 1965), *Ensign Flandry* (Chilton, 1966), *Satan's World* (Doubleday 1969), *Tau Zero* (Doubleday, 1970), *The Dancer From Atlantis* (Doubleday, 1971), *The People of the Wind* (NAL, 1973), *A Knight of Ghost and Shadows* (SFBC, 1975), *The Avatar* (Putnam, 1978), *Conan the Rebel* (Bantam, 1980), *The Poleotechnic League* (Tor, 1981), *Orion Shall Rise* (Timescape, 1983), *Time Patrolman* (Tor, 1983), *The Game of Empire* (Baen, 1985), *The King of Ys* tetralogy with Karen Anderson (Baen,

1986-1988), *The Boat of a Million Years* (Tor, 1989), *The Shield of Time* (Tor, 1990), *The Time Patrol* (Tor, 1991), and *Harvest of Stars* (Tor, 1993). And that's only a brief look at his novels and collections.

His short stories in the genres of SF, Fantasy, Mystery, Adventure and Detective fiction include over 300 works published in *Astounding*, *Planet Stories*, *Galaxy*, *Super Science Stories*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Saint Detective Magazine*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *Jack London's Adventure Magazine*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Fantastic Universe*, *Toronto Star Weekly*, *Analog*, *If SF*, *Amazing*, *Orbit*, *Boy's Life*, *Dangerous Visions*, *Asimov's*, *Pulphouse Paperbacks*, *Full Spectrum*, *3*, *Omni*, and many more.

The non-fiction essays and articles were notable, as are his non-fiction books. But enough of a good thing. The words of Poul Anderson are what's important. Like the words he uses when asked what writers have influenced him the

most...

"Although there is a wide range of writers whom I admire, I don't think any can be very directly influential on another writer unless that writer can in some sense emulate them. For instance, I stand in awe of Karel Capek's ability to get wholly inside the minds of his characters, but I'll never be able to do anything like that. On the other hand, while I don't pretend to be in Kipling's league, we are in the same ball park and I've learned a lot from him.

"Such influences on me - repeat, I'll never be that good, but by trying I've become better than would otherwise be the case - in-

clude Homer and the Greek tragedians, the Icelandic Eddas and sagas, the *King James Bible*, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Joseph Conrad, Robinson Jeffers, and a Dane by the name of Johannes V. Jensen. In the science fiction field they've mainly been the giants of the Campbell Golden Age, ca. 1937-1943, together with Campbell himself as an editor. These lists are not complete, they only hold the most obvious people."

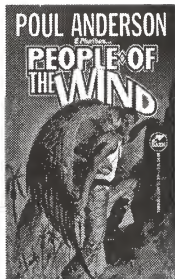
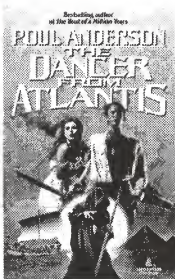
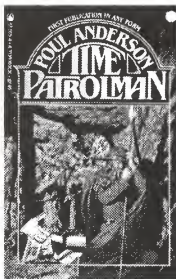
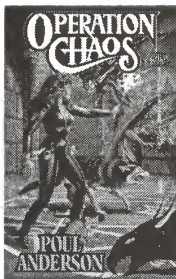
An influence may not always be pleasurable. The writers he enjoys reading are equally as diverse as those he learns from. "I especially like Isak Dinesen, James Branch Cabell, the earlier Dunsany, A. Conan Doyle, Saki, P.G. Wodehouse, G.K. Chesterton, and several more come readily to mind, including Hans Christian Andersen (no relation) in the original and various other Scandinavians whom few people over here have heard of. There are a lot of writers who've done just one or two tremendous works, the rest, if any, being lesser. Offhand, in no particular order: *Moby Dick*, *The Romance of Leonardo Da Vinci*, *Travels In Arabian Deserts*, *The Innocent Voyage*, *The Silence Of The Sea* - this list could go on for a long time, and still I'd think of titles left off, as soon as I've sealed this up. I'm also a poetry buff, with likes ranging all over the world and all through time up till perhaps 1940. Hardly anything worthy of the name has, as far as I know, been done since then.

"This is, as said, just a set of casual mentions, by no means including everything that has deeply touched me. I refrain on purpose from naming any contemporary writers in the science fiction and fantasy areas, though a few of them are very fine."

Let's you think Poul Anderson is an over-serious curmudgeon who never leaves the halls of dusty papyri, listen to what he had to say when I asked him what was the best limerick he'd ever heard...

"As with writers, there are so

**"He liked...a
good argument,
and never
held it
against me
when I
disagreed"**



many great limericks I couldn't possibly choose between them. A few even clean, for example:

There once was a learned baboon

Who played always on the bassoon.

For he said, 'It appears

That in billions of years

I shall finally hit on a tune.

"I've composed my share. This won a prize in a contest run by the British magazine *New Scientist*.

A foolish young chemist named Kroll

Heated fulminate up in a bowl.

Without distillation

He got separation,

i.e., of his body and soul.

"I cannot bear to leave out one that's a bit risqué. In a story I once mentioned a limerick about a spaceman and girl in free fall. Anthony Boucher, who bought the story for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, thereupon sent me:

A spaceman and girl in free fall

Found a new way of heeding love's call.

'I've been tumbled,' she said,

'On floor, sofa, and bed,

'But never halfway up a wall.'

"There are rumors, perhaps apocryphal, that this has, by now, happened."

Hmmm. Mothers, do you want your daughters and sons to

grow up and become science fiction writers? Then again, as the writer-wife of another noted science fiction author has said in print, "writing science fiction is a sexually transmitted disease."

Quite.

The editor and writer John W. Campbell has long been both famous, and a source of much commentary, among people who read a lot of science fiction. As editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, he "discovered" such major SF writers as Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, L. Sprague de Camp and Poul Anderson. But even decades after his death, rumors abound about how difficult it was to work with him. Did Anderson have a hard time.

"As for Campbell, because of geographical separation we seldom met, always cordially when it happened. He was fortunate enough to become one of his correspondents, and those were explosively brilliant letters, which often contained ideas for stories but even oftener went into all sorts of other matters. Mostly, he just bought stuff of mine that came his way. A few times he asked for changes, and while I might be irritated at the time, it always turned out that he'd been right. Occasionally he'd reject something, and occasionally his reason seemed curious to me, but he was, after all, the editor. Besides frequently suggesting ideas, he brought Chesley Bonestell and me

together in a set of picture-and-story collaborations. That was a grand experience for which I shall always be grateful to Campbell.

"He liked nothing better than a good argument, and never held it against me when I disagreed with him, even when it involved things as dear to him as psionics. Gradually, I discovered that beneath that somewhat overpowering surface was a gentle, indeed rather shy, and very lovable soul."

Anderson's science fiction is noted for his attention to science details, and science fact. So how does he go about computing an orbit? "Celestial mechanics is a complex and difficult subject in which I am not at all qualified. Usually I can apply elementary principles, such as Kepler's and Newton's laws and conservation of energy, to figure out an approximation close enough for story purposes. Sometimes the questions get beyond me. For instance, what ranges of orbits around the members of a double star are reasonably stable? In such cases I appeal to experts, who are invariably very kind and helpful."

The same kind of concern for detail and accuracy goes into his historical fantasy and time travel novels. "To work up the background for a historical setting or, for that matter, a here-and-now one not familiar to me, I read everything about it that's readily available. If possible, I visit the site in person. When this research

doesn't seem to be enough, once again I ask people who know. My own studies enable me to ask reasonably intelligent questions." Reasonably intelligent? That is an unduly modest choice of words for the author of *The Dancer From Atlantis*, who recreated a Levantine Bronze Age 'sense of place' so real I still recall it more than twenty years after reading the novel. Nor does it do justice to such tour-de-force works as *The Boat Of A Million Years*, which brims over with such vibrant historical characters and so many historical periods pastiches that anyone considering a career as a history major would do well to read it. It's that good. And that stimulating.

I asked Anderson to discuss his most intimate collaboration, that with his wife Karen. Besides producing daughter Astrid of the blue eyes, they also created *The King of Ys* historical fantasy tetralogy, which began with a poem written by Karen. How did it come to pass that Karen joined him in writing?

"My professional relationship with Karen began more or less like mine with Gordy. Besides the fact that she was beautiful and charming and so forth, I married her because she had brains. We could talk. Our conversations range widely. She reads more than I do and retains it better, so she's become an invaluable source of information as well as idea discussant, critic, and what she calls resident nitpicker. A lot of neologisms I have used are hers, including 'sophont' for 'intelligent being,' which is catching on even outside science fiction. She's drafted maps for me. I could go on, but that gives you the idea.

"Once he saw what was hap-

pening, Greg Bear asked if he could have the same service. Of course she was glad to provide it. Greg may be the only man alive who actively invites his mother-in-law's criticisms!

"Quite likely this has much to do with the fact that Karen and I are closing in on our fortieth anniversary."

Anderson has also collaborated with other writers, and written in other writer's universes, such as Larry Niven's Known Space and the Conan tradition. What did he like most about swimming in someone else's pond?

"Writing in someone else's universe, which I've done perhaps half a dozen times, was something different to do, a new challenge. (In fact, I began by myself, with the fantasy novel *A Midsummer Tempest*, set in a world where all Shakespeare's plays are historical fact. Somebody remarked to me that no other writer would have had the chutzpah to attempt that.) To do

so, trying to get it right, is as demanding as to make up one's own cosmos from scratch. Once again I am indebted to Karen. I didn't have the time or patience for the necessary detailed research, but she went through all of Conan -- which she doesn't even like -- and Larry Niven's Man-Kzin wars -- which she does -- and drew up the full backgrounds for me, riding herd on me afterward.

"I don't share Norman Spinrad's opinion that shared universes are a literary degradation. I think they're quite legitimate. After all, they go back at least to the Greeks; Aeschylus and the rest of those boys were drawing on a common body of legend. How-

ever, probably I've been there often enough by now. If ever I do it again, chances are that that will just be because a friend asked me to, at a time when I had a few days to spare. Nor have I any wish to franchise anything of my own."

More serious-toned Anderson novels have included *There Will Be Time* and *The Boat Of A Million Years*. Among their many story-threads are some that take a jaundiced view of religion, and religious beliefs. I wondered if Anderson felt the moral impulse of religion had been discredited by religion's push of oligarchy, hierarchy and revealed truth? He quickly put me straight.

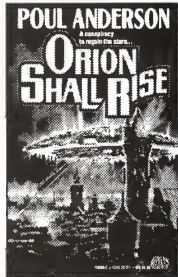
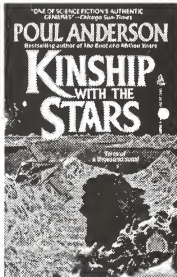
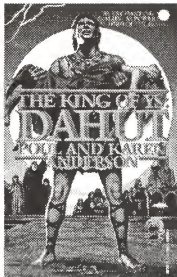
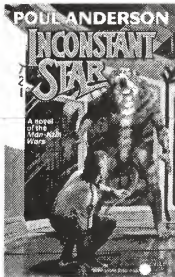
"I'm not hostile to religion. That would be foolish, when it's obviously so vital a part of human psychology. We all have a religion, in the sense of a concept of what reality is basically like and of what this means to humankind. But of course these concepts vary tremendously among individuals and societies. It's therefore equally foolish to speak of 'religion' as if it were a single phenomenon or a monolithic institution.

"On philosophical grounds, I reject moral relativism. Good and evil have as much objective reality as, say, gravitational potentials or the energy of the vacuum -- although, to be sure, they are much more subtle and hard to define. It follows that all societies and ways of life are not equal; some, with all their sins and faults, have been superior to others. These considerations are logically independent of the existence or nonexistence of a personal God. But to go into this would require a book.

"Yes, people have misused religion, as they have misused sex and technology and just about everything else you can name. It does not follow that there is anything inherently bad about any of these, or that we can live without them."

Anderson also deals explicitly in his novels with what some view as the innate human impulse to war. I asked a leading question: if

"We all have a religion, in the sense of a concept of what reality is basically like..."



that innate impulse could be eliminated genetically, did he think we would lose something essential that defines us as human?

"It hasn't been proven, but yes, there is reason to think that a certain amount of combativeness is innate in humans. Consider the behavior of chimpanzees, for example, and the fact that their DNA differs from ours by less than 2%. In that case, obviously we couldn't remove the factor from ourselves, whether by genetic engineering or selective breeding or whatever, without changing our nature in some very basic fashion; and I suspect the result would be especially viable.

"However, inborn drives can be redirected, sublimated, or otherwise controlled. Most people in civilized countries have no desire to murder, rape, or rob, even though such activities become ordinary whenever civilization breaks down. If there is nothing to trigger the warlike impulse in the civilized, and there are social controls to keep the uncivilized in line, wars won't happen.

"How that state of affairs might be brought about is a rather large question. I have a few ideas of my own, but I don't have time to write the book they call for, and in any event they'd only be a few out of the many that are doubtless needed."

Anderson's Polesotechnic League novels, featuring David Falkayn and Nicholas van Rijn, fol-

low the adventures of merchant princes who lead the first wave of human interstellar colonization. They practice a capitalism similar to that used by the Hanseatic League of Northern Europe. I wondered if, given the distances and time factors involved in interstellar colonization, such a loose confederation would really work. Could they establish any kind of social contract over such vast distances?

"The future history that includes the Polesotechnic League and the Terran Empire depends, like nearly all science fiction, on certain assumptions. One of them in this case is that a way will be found to get around the light-speed limit and travel between the stars in a reasonable time at a reasonable energy cost. Given this, yes, I think social contracts and even politics can be established. After all, they have existed on Earth in the past, when the time and trouble involved in a voyage were comparable to those I postulated for the future.

"Under my assumptions, the main limiting factor is organization. Beyond a certain total population of a certain number of worlds, anything like unification becomes impossible. The complexity gets too great. I wonder if the United States may not be becoming ungovernable for such reasons? Computers, etc., help, but only so much. Since nobody today can calculate that 'so

much,' the limits that I set in the stories were arbitrary."

His Dominic Flandry novels take a *fin de siècle* look at the closing years of the galactic Terran Empire, and the role of one man in holding back the darkness. These works seem to show an expectation that when humanity colonizes interstellar space, we will repeat the cycles of imperial history so common in Earth history. I wondered why Anderson saw future history this way?

"I don't see future history as bound to follow any particular course. People make choices, and the consequences can be good or bad. It's true, of course, that certain mistakes get repeated over and over. For example, Alexander Tytler pointed out two centuries ago that a republic is doomed 'when the majority of the people discover they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury.' Other factors come in too, and thus history does tend to go through cycles of rise and fall that have many similarities to each other. However, this isn't fated, and once in a while a society far down the road has been restored.

"Thus to some extent, the League-and-Empire stories are cautionary tales. Naturally, this is just one element in them, and not the most important. My main desire is always to spin an entertaining yarn and, where possible, explore some aspect of this wonderful universe we live in.

"Also, I don't really believe we ever will have faster-than-light travel. Furthermore, it seems increasingly likely that, because of technology, the future will have many features totally unlike anything that has occurred in the past. In my more recent work I've begun using these motifs. It's another new thing to try."

Those new motifs were most recently on exhibit in his current novel *Harvest of Stars*, which Keith Ferrell of *Omni* magazine called "A true masterpiece."

How does Anderson see this book?

"*Harvest of Stars* is what Karen calls a kitchen sink book. You throw in everything including the kitchen sink. Among the things it deals with are space travel and enterprise, space colonization, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, downloading of personalities, totalitarian ideology, cultural conflicts, and celestial mechanics. It begins a couple of centuries from now, with some flashbacks to the twentieth, and goes on for about a thousand years, ending on a planet of Alpha Centauri. I hope readers enjoy it."

And his current work in progress? "The book currently under construction is neither a sequel nor a prequel to *Harvest*; Karen has dubbed it a parquel. One of the narrative threads goes back to an earlier period, the other is concurrent with the later part, describing events that go on meanwhile. The development and expansion of genuine artificial intelligence is a major theme. This interests me, as it does a number of other writers, for the obvious reason that if it comes about, it will have a revolutionary impact. What form that revolution will

take is anybody's guess. I hope mine has some originality. The working title, which will probably be changed, is *Proserpina*."

An earlier, different strand of Poul Anderson's work is his Time Patrol stories, which explore the duty of and the impact on past histories by future time travelers. In a non-didactic way, they well illustrate how what we *thought* we knew about past cultures is not always what really was. I wondered if Anderson thought the invention of a true time machine would be the salvation of humankind, or its damnation? Once again, the master storyteller makes clear what is sometimes

unclearly read.

"I don't believe in time travel either. If it should come to pass regardless, then the consequences will depend on how it works, what natural laws it operates under. Suppose the past cannot be changed – this implies that the present and future are equally rigid, a completely deterministic universe. Then obviously there will be no

danger, except perhaps to the intrepid travelers themselves. If, on the other hand, there is mutability then I'd expect some such organization as the Time Patrol would be established to safeguard things."

When I read Anderson's *The People Of The Wind*, which told a story of co-existence on the planet Avalon between two species, Humans and the bird-like Ythri, and their joint alliance to oppose the imperial ambitions of Earth, I simplicitically saw the Ythrians as a liberty-loving Sparta standing against the overweening government of the Persian hordes. So I asked him what, in his view, it takes for *individual* liberty to pre-

vail over a state that wishes to dominate the individual?

"I wouldn't exactly call ancient Sparta libertarian!

"The liberty and privacy of the individual, such as formerly existed in this country, are a historical rarity, an unstable condition and therefore generally short-lived. They can be lost through conquest, as for example most European countries in this century losing theirs to the Nazis, the Soviets, or both in succession. In such cases there is a chance of regaining them. I wonder if it can happen when they are lost to domestic 'reformers' or other demagogues. (It did in the case of Germany, yes, but first Nazism had to be militarily crushed, with the Western victors being democracies.) How freedom is lost from within is a complex question; there are many different ways. You can find a brilliant discussion in Bertrand de Jouvenel's *On Power*, among other books. Or you can glance back at that quotation from Tytler, or you can read Kipling's poem 'The Gods of the Copybook Headings,' or you can look at current events in this country."

"I am not optimistic about the future of freedom in America. It's already in a bad way. Still, we have to keep trying. As I often say, the one certain way to lose all hope is to give up all hope."

"*The People Of The Wind*, though, isn't so much about this issue as it is about intercultural conflict. It was inspired by the siege of Belfort in the Franco-Prussian War and the aftermath of that heroic resistance."

Many of Anderson's characters are indeed liberty-loving, independent-minded protagonists such as David Falkayn, Peter Koskinen, Dominic Flandry and Jack Havig. Does Anderson think free men are a threat to the state? Free men – and women – are not necessarily a threat to the state. Indeed, they are the citizens of a free country. Our founding fathers established a government.

"I am not optimistic about the future of freedom in America. It's already in a bad way"

What they sought to do was limit its powers. They would be horrified to see how it has grown since then.

"The Communists were right, however; although the United States never seriously contemplated a first strike against the Soviet Union, it was a mortal threat nevertheless. Simply by existing and flourishing as a relatively free society, it exposed the lie in Communist pretensions, and kept millions of people within the Empire from resigning themselves to eternal oppression.

"Now, as this republic hardens into empire itself (Jeffers' phrase), Americans who still prefer freedom find themselves increasingly isolated and ineffectual. Slight though the movement back toward it was in the Reagan years – the growth of government was not stopped, let alone reversed, only slowed down a little – he became the Great Satan of the liberal establishment; for that short while, a prominent voice was questioning a few of its sacred dogmas. If we could put together a political organization with some strength, that genuinely stood for freedom, the liberal screams would be heard clear across the galaxy. That would indeed be a menace to the state – the statist's kind of state."

It sounds like Ronald Reagan is Anderson's great leader. Not quite.

"Ronald Reagan is no hero of mine, but he did give some halting leadership, or at least some voice, to the ideal of liberty. Very little was actually accomplished, and of course George Bush completely blew that little.

"If and when enough of the American people really want freedom – want it enough to accept its not inconsiderable cost – they will get a spokesman. Once such a movement is perceived as going somewhere, it will attract more followers. Eventually it will find its living embodiment, as Washington, Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt became the embodiments

of their various movements.

"What I fear is that this leader will be of the worst sort who appeals to the worst instincts of the people. The liberal establishment has been in charge so long, and produced so many demagogues of its own, that no libertarian demagogue is in sight. I can imagine him, though – not a reasonable and realistic Thomas Sowell or Robert Poole, but an extremist preaching hatred for the poor as tax-sucking parasites; or we might get a fundamentalist who wants to control the atheistic scientists, or something of that nature. After all, Hitler rode to power on a wave of perfectly genuine grievances.

"Should such a person arise, I'd have to choose the lesser evil and join ranks with the liberals. I'm hoping for someone better. At my age, it doesn't matter too much to me personally; but I have grandchildren."

Not quite your stereotype libertarian. Nor your typical Reagan voter. Poul Anderson calls 'em as he sees 'em. And woe be unto those who play falsely with the American people. Or with Poul Anderson's grandchildren. I asked him how the experience of family life has affected his writing. "Being a family man has, of course, also been formative, and given me subject matter for writing. Somebody has said that I dwell more on the pleasure of hearth and home than any other science fiction writer. Could be."

Then *which* does he think will persist the longest – the legacy of his child and grandchildren, or...his writing? "I doubt that anybody currently writing in the English language, in any category including the so-called mainstream, will be much remem-

bered 50 years from now, as Hemingway, Eliot, etc. are still remembered half a century after their own heydays.

"If I'm right about this, which only time will tell, it doesn't bother me. I'm lucky in having gotten to just the right kind and degree of reputation for Karen and me. It gives us entree to the sort of people and places that interest us, while sparing us the attentions of the paparazzi. I've been able to set things up so that she ought to be pretty well provided for after I'm gone. I hope those whom I have liked and those whom I have loved will remember me kindly as a person. Otherwise

posthumous fame is a matter of complete indifference.

"On the other hand, to know that the life that was in her and me and our forebears will go on, that means a great deal."

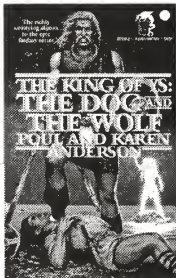
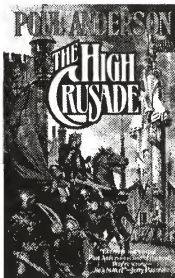
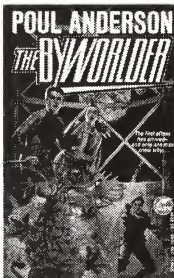
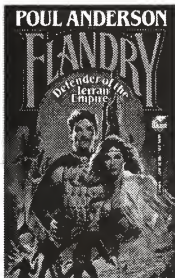
Perspective is what you get after forty-five years in the field. And after living a good life. He started out in science fiction's Golden Age, and

has seen the "market cycles" come and go. He's survived them all. What does he think of "cycles" and how does he think SF has matured as a genre and a literature?

"Actually, to me the Golden Age was the early Campbell periods, ca. 1937-1943. I came in later, in what was perhaps a Silver Age. But that's just a question of personal taste.

"Science fiction has had its good periods, when there was a great deal of innovation and brilliant writing, and its bad periods, when most of what appeared was dull and derivative. It's also had its fashions, which have come, been hailed as the absolute culmination, and died away again. The New Wave and Cyber-

"What I fear is that this leader will be of the worst sort who appeals to the worst instincts of the people"



punk come to mind as examples. I'm not saying that they did not bring in some new techniques and insights, from which we all learned. But mainly, Algis Budrys was right when he remarked that trends are for second-raters.

"I think the special characteristic of the field in the past 10 to 15 years has been the sheer size of it. Nobody can keep up with everything any longer, or even a substantial fraction of the whole. Inevitably, this has meant a vast amount of mediocrity and utter garbage. (Sturgeon's rule.) On the plus side, it has meant room for more experimentation, innovation, and uniqueness than ever before. The trick is to find the worthwhile stuff. I'm afraid that quite a bit of it gets lost in the heap."

Does he think this increase in the amount of poor science fiction is why SF is viewed so poorly by today's literary mainstream writers? "I say nothing against the so-called mainstream per se. It includes some of the world's greatest literature, as well as the usual proportion of garbage. Historically, though, it originated in the eighteenth century and reached its peak in the nineteenth, as a form concerned mainly with the rising bourgeoisie of that period. It still bears the mark of its origin—being, for instance, more inwardly than outwardly directed. James Joyce carried this tendency about as far as it can go.

"On the whole, science fiction is differently oriented. Therefore, by definition, it does not meet the standards of the mainstream. Neither do the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *Egil's Saga*, the Arthurian cycle, and quite a lot else; but such things are safely distant in the past.

"I feel rather sorry for those writers who have entered science fiction in the past 10 or 20 years and tried to make mainstream out of it. They seem to want to be Norman Mailer or Eudora Welty so badly that they can taste it, but they haven't quite got what it takes, and so they must work where the competition for that kind of honor isn't so strong.

"I do not mean that we in this field can't learn a great deal and take inspiration from the likes of Tolstoy and Faulkner. We can and we should. It's just that what we do best has some important differences. Reality—which all fiction, one way or another, tries to represent—is too big and various for any single literary form to encompass it."

Then what advice does he have for the new writer about writing? Especially the business side?

"(1) Be yourself and be honest. Of course you aren't going to plagiarize, but don't slavishly imitate either. Find your individual voice; it will be your trademark. Level with your editor and publisher. For instance, if circum-

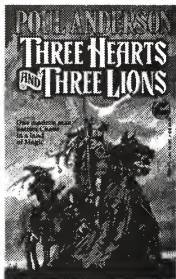
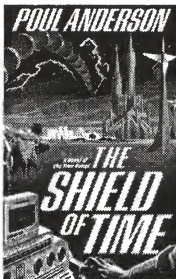
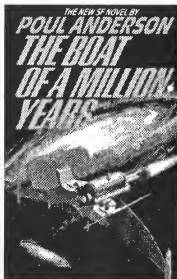
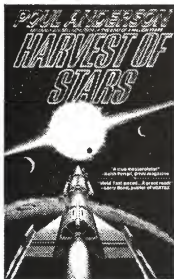
stances come up such that you can't deliver a manuscript by deadline date, let them know as soon as possible so that they can reschedule.

"(2) Read your contract carefully, ask—or have your agent ask—if some clause that seems objectionable can't be amended, but once it's signed, abide by it to the very best of your ability.

"(3) Keep complete and accurate records of everything pertaining to your income and business expenses. It's your only weapon against the tax fuzz."

The *craft* of writing is a different matter from the business. What advice does Anderson offer on the craft?

"Robert Heinlein formulated three rules many years ago, of which two are still pertinent here. (1) You must write. Too many wannabes talk a good job of writing and never do it. (2) You must finish what you write. More often than not there'll be some kind of hump somewhere near the middle that looks tough to get over, and you'll be tempted to set the job aside till some later date. Chances are you'll never get back to it. You'd have done better in the first place to go fishing. That might have put food on the table. To this I might add one of my own: (3) Write scared. No matter how much you've sold, you can be replaced so unbelievably easily. Many a writer once rich and famous ended his days in alco-



holic poverty. Always do the very best you can, and try to make it a little better than that. Besides, isn't this what craftsmanship is all about?"

The above issues concern mainly writing technique. A far more critical issue rarely understood by younger writers is how one persists through year after year of writing disappointments. What advice does Anderson offer on how to persevere until publication?

"When young people who hope to become writers ask me for advice, there's very little I can give them. It's such an individual matter; no two cases are alike. However, I usually say something like this.

"(1) You can't write unless you have something to write about. Learn. Experience. Read widely. Travel. Try your hand at different kinds of work and pleasure. Fall in love, or out of it. Observe. Meet as wide a variety of people as you can, and don't talk at them, listen to them. True Jane Austen led a very quiet life, but she took keen note of everything that went on around her, and then she thought about it. If you don't have her extraordinary gift of empathy – and I, for one, don't – then you'll need to explore other aspects of the world.

"(2) If you're going to college, major in anything that interests you, especially if it will give you a way to earn a living, *except* cre-

ative writing. I've seen too many promising talents smothered under that weight of theory.

"(3) Whatever you intend to say in a given passage, look for the best, most vivid way to say it. I don't mean purpose prose. Nearly all the great writing is stylistically very clean, often very simple. 'Rising in the east, the sun cast his rays upon gods and on men, who plow the earth and perish.' 'The morn, in russet mantle clad, Walks on the dew of yon high eastern hill' 'Heave or sink it, leave or drink it, we were masters of the seal' and these examples are all from verse. Shun the cliché. That obviously applies to characters and plots, too."

In closing, I asked him to describe himself, his interests, and his hobbies. As I've come to understand better, there is no simple ending to anything that Poul Anderson writes. But listen to how he begins...

"Well, I enjoy reading, travel, good conversation, woodworking, gardening, drawing, camping, hiking, sailing, food and drink – I'm a fair to middling cook – and a lot of other such things. I used

to be a pretty good poker player and a combatant in the Society for Creative Anachronism, but it's been long since I last indulged in either. There are all sorts of other activities I want to take up such as backyard astronomy, when time allows.

"Karen and I contribute to certain organizations, mostly conservationist, and we've been somewhat active in efforts to sustain the space program. Otherwise, as far as politics is concerned, we mainly just vote, and I try to be a voice for liberty, without getting obsessive about it.

"If some of my remarks earlier in this session have made me seem pretty dour, they weren't meant to. On the whole, my life has been extraordinarily fortunate, in the upper 10% of all the humans who have ever lived, quite likely in the upper 1%. A great deal of that I owe to the founders of the United States of America and their vision. All I want to do is pay the debt forward, doing whatever I can to the end that future Americans, eventually all future generations everywhere, shall have lives as good or even better." ■

"If some of my remarks earlier...have made me seem pretty dour, they weren't meant to"

Mary C.

If it was Benjamin Spooner Briggs the police had found that night in Kensington, then he'd certainly aged well in the hundred odd years since he had been skipper of the *Mary Celeste*.

BY STEPHEN HUNT

ART BY BOB E. HOBBS

I imagined Green's face in the darkness of the projection theatre. Two seats to my left. I conjured up the landslide of flesh which had cascaded down his jowls like an avalanche, leaving a cruel and pinched bulldog vista in its wake. There were rumours Green had been a bare-knuckle boxer in the 1950s, working the underground rings between Harlesden and Highgate.

Hardly likely to be true. Not that his short wiry frame--still wrapped tight at fifty-nine--wasn't up to the task anymore, or that his nose wasn't broken enough; it was just that anyone who had reached his level of authority would have made a definite point of concealing their origins.

There's power in names, or so they say. There was a name on Green's lips then too.

"Our mate purporting to be Benjamin Spooner Briggs was found wandering naked down Kensington Highstreet last night. Around 3 a.m."

I looked at Green, his face in silhouette, then looked back at the video screen, the petite wall-sized sort you'd find inside a French porno cinema or Steven Spielberg's Hollywood ranch.

Filling the screen was a Metropolitan Police photograph of the man who claimed he

was Benjamin Spooner Briggs--all sideburns and greased back hair. It must have been taken just after he was arrested because the photo was dated June 1993.

I cleared my throat. "The name didn't mean anything to the arresting officers then, Colonel?"

"No bleeding chance, Orange. Just a pair of your local London woodentops."

"Can we confirm it was Spooner?"

With a dull whir the video screen cycled to the next picture, a monochrome sketch on faded yellow paper. Illustrated *New York Herald*, mid-19th century edition judging by the elegant over-ornamental cut of the serif typeface.

"Ere's a drawing of the real Spooner."

Identical, right down to the sleepy look in the eyes. If it was Benjamin Spooner Briggs the police had found that night in

ctd. na.

had procured somewhat similar testimony, it being understood that she had seen, and that she was subsequently given. A number of letters were also written to show the acknowledgment of his speaking of him as "nephew," "cousin," "brother," and "sister," and after giving ample consideration to the various cases, and to the evidence to grant letters of administration.

A WILL OF SOUND MIND.

the late MONNET KELLY has been
and is now being administered upon.
Shows:

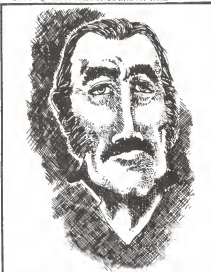
and testament of ROBERT KELLY, of York, gentleman. I, ROBERT KELLY, being of sound and disposing mind, understanding, do hereby make, publish my last will and testament in writing, that is to say, first, I direct that my last and funeral expenses shall be paid by the persons named, as soon after my decease as may be practicable.

and beneath to my wife, to my bottle A, all my household furniture, plate, books, and further articles of constituting my household establishment residence in the City of Newark, and mortgage on a farm in the neck, now in the possession of Aidor

device and bequeath all the rest, regular or irregular of every kind to my mother named, to have and to hold, the trust and for the uses and purposes, that is to say, to receive the conveyance of the same, to do as she may think proper, to her heirs, assigns, executors, administrators, or assigns, as may be situated, at the day be she to obtain for the same, and to leave the same and to receive the same, to her heirs, assigns, executors, administrators, or assigns, and all my personal estate in realty, or such other accoutrements as seem best, and to keep the same so long as the trust shall continue, and to use the same in and through her, and to use my wife and children, as hereinbefore said, and direct that one fourth parts of said real estate and of all my personal estate, bequeathed to my wife, be

He was accompanied by two gentlemen, with a desire to have met him before, and insisted on his drinking; they drank several times, and towards evening **Northam** invited him to accompany him home, saying he lived in the upper part of the City; he consented, and when in Norfolk-street, in front of a stable, **Northam** suddenly knocked the prosecutor down, and robbed him of his gold watch and chain, valued at £120. He then ran off. The Policeman was called to the Tenth Ward, who happened to be near by, pursued and overhauled the robber, and took him to the Station-house.

The Magistrate committed him for trial.



The water, struggled a few moments, and then sank to the bottom. His name is supposed to be JAMES McDONNELL. He was about 31 years of age. An inquest upon the body will be held to-day.

END OVER.

Crowder Higgs also held an inquest, at a house 11
East eighth street, between First and Second

1. A. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 221. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 227. 228. 229. 230. 231. 232. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 240. 241. 242. 243. 244. 245. 246. 247. 248. 249. 250. 251. 252. 253. 254. 255. 256. 257. 258. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 264. 265. 266. 267. 268. 269. 270. 271. 272. 273. 274. 275. 276. 277. 278. 279. 280. 281. 282. 283. 284. 285. 286. 287. 288. 289. 290. 291. 292. 293. 294. 295. 296. 297. 298. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 304. 305. 306. 307. 308. 309. 310. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 317. 318. 319. 320. 321. 322. 323. 324. 325. 326. 327. 328. 329. 330. 331. 332. 333. 334. 335. 336. 337. 338. 339. 340. 341. 342. 343. 344. 345. 346. 347. 348. 349. 350. 351. 352. 353. 354. 355. 356. 357. 358. 359. 360. 361. 362. 363. 364. 365. 366. 367. 368. 369. 370. 371. 372. 373. 374. 375. 376. 377. 378. 379. 380. 381. 382. 383. 384. 385. 386. 387. 388. 389. 390. 391. 392. 393. 394. 395. 396. 397. 398. 399. 400. 401. 402. 403. 404. 405. 406. 407. 408. 409. 410. 411. 412. 413. 414. 415. 416. 417. 418. 419. 420. 421. 422. 423. 424. 425. 426. 427. 428. 429. 430. 431. 432. 433. 434. 435. 436. 437. 438. 439. 440. 441. 442. 443. 444. 445. 446. 447. 448. 449. 450. 451. 452. 453. 454. 455. 456. 457. 458. 459. 460. 461. 462. 463. 464. 465. 466. 467. 468. 469. 470. 471. 472. 473. 474. 475. 476. 477. 478. 479. 480. 481. 482. 483. 484. 485. 486. 487. 488. 489. 490. 491. 492. 493. 494. 495. 496. 497. 498. 499. 500. 501. 502. 503. 504. 505. 506. 507. 508. 509. 510. 511. 512. 513. 514. 515. 516. 517. 518. 519. 520. 521. 522. 523. 524. 525. 526. 527. 528. 529. 530. 531. 532. 533. 534. 535. 536. 537. 538. 539. 540. 541. 542. 543. 544. 545. 546. 547. 548. 549. 550. 551. 552. 553. 554. 555. 556. 557. 558. 559. 560. 561. 562. 563. 564. 565. 566. 567. 568. 569. 570. 571. 572. 573. 574. 575. 576. 577. 578. 579. 580. 581. 582. 583. 584. 585. 586. 587. 588. 589. 590. 591. 592. 593. 594. 595. 596. 597. 598. 599. 600. 601. 602. 603. 604. 605. 606. 607. 608. 609. 610. 611. 612. 613. 614. 615. 616. 617. 618. 619. 620. 621. 622. 623. 624. 625. 626. 627. 628. 629. 630. 631. 632. 633. 634. 635. 636. 637. 638. 639. 640. 641. 642. 643. 644. 645. 646. 647. 648. 649. 650. 651. 652. 653. 654. 655. 656. 657. 658. 659. 660. 661. 662. 663. 664. 665. 666. 667. 668. 669. 670. 671. 672. 673. 674. 675. 676. 677. 678. 679. 680. 681. 682. 683. 684. 685. 686. 687. 688. 689. 690. 691. 692. 693. 694. 695. 696. 697. 698. 699. 700. 701. 702. 703. 704. 705. 706. 707. 708. 709. 710. 711. 712. 713. 714. 715. 716. 717. 718. 719. 720. 721. 722. 723. 724. 725. 726. 727. 728. 729. 730. 731. 732. 733. 734. 735. 736. 737. 738. 739. 740. 741. 742. 743. 744. 745. 746. 747. 748. 749. 750. 751. 752. 753. 754. 755. 756. 757. 758. 759. 760. 761. 762. 763. 764. 765. 766. 767. 768. 769. 770. 771. 772. 773. 774. 775. 776. 777. 778. 779. 780. 781. 782. 783. 784. 785. 786. 787. 788. 789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 836. 837. 838. 839. 84

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Discussion

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LONG ISL.

Kensington, then he'd certainly aged well in the hundred odd years since he had been skipper of the *Mary Celeste*.

"Now 'ere's the transcript of the DAIRY crash team 'at went into the Acton Road section house. This was taken at 4:18 a.m."

Jumping to a shaky tape from one of our camcorders, I noticed the footage was only in 16-bit, unrealistic colours painting the police station like a Disney cartoon animated on the down side of an ecstasy high. I thought the voice belonged to Dawkins, a rather dour agent as I recall.

"Second report. There's no sign of Spooner, all communications have been cut from the inside--it looks like a spontaneous power failure although we're still connected to the national grid, our sparks just confirmed that. Yes?"

Dawkins, if that's who it was holding the camcorder, panned the camera around. "There's seven night duty staff signed in for tonight. Six of them have vanished, no sign at all. This is the seventh."

A blank face in a starched white shirt gazed out of the screen. There was a trace of

drool on his inspector's badge, and one of our doctors had him connected to some equipment.

The doctor, stiff in a white flack jacket, turned around to stare into the camcorder. "He was developing a new personality every five minutes when we broke in here, he's up to one every three now. I think it's biological rather than psychological, I'm going to try an injection of Tetchimarimemstron to stabilise the epinodal erosion."

Green glanced at me to gauge my reaction, then fastforwarded the tape. "Matey died by the way, poor sod. Reaction to the drug. "Ere, you'll like this bit."

Slowing, a cell door came into frame, and Dawkins, if it was Dawkins, stopped sounding like a hyperactive fruit fly as the image flickered into focus. "We found this inside Spooner's heavily blood-stained cell." A mess of electrodes was lifted for a close-up. "What's left of a five quid hand-held computer game called Banana Chase. It was signed in as the property of Spooner's cellmate for the night, one Jason Gould who's also vanished by the way. Spooner seems to

have taken it apart and reconfigured it to open the cell door--it's one of the new ones, slaved to a computer to record visitors and exit times. Meant to cut out prisoners 'falling down the stairs' too often, if you know what I mean. Spooner jimmied the door at 3:45 a.m., power went down shortly after that. Oh, and the blood stains in the cell match two of the six missing PCs. A clean-up unit is on their way."

Green killed the video but left the lights out. Perhaps he liked the darkness.

"Questions."

"Only the obvious ones," I scratched my nose. "Are there any major conjunctions coming up? Is Spooner likely to be working for the Others, or anything else we've come up against. Will he have support?"

Green waved an aide forward from one of the back seats. "Ere's a list of potential targets. As for the Others, does it matter?"

A DAIRY specialist once told me in the canteen that they put us together because our personalities complement each other. If by that he meant I'm not a red-haired psychopath with a gun fetish and a leaning towards sadism, I would have to agree.

"No, not really."

"You'll do alright without Penny then, matey?"

Penny Black, she's my sometimes partner. A DAIRY specialist once told me in the canteen that they put us together because our personalities complement each other. If by that he meant I'm not a red-haired psychopath with a gun fetish and a leaning towards sadism, I would have to agree.

"I'll manage."

Penny should still be in Cottingham. Last Tuesday a GP at the hospital there reported all his patients were testing significantly low on amounts of the oxygen-carrying protein haemoglobin. Significant like they shouldn't even be alive. The GP disappeared after faxing his report to a Platelet specialist at Queen Mary and Westfield. If there's something funny growing under the beds down there I pity the poor sods she comes across.

I leant back in my seat. "That's it then, Colonel. I'll be going."

"'Ang on a bloody minute, matey. You've forgotten what we talked about yesterday."

Green's aide opened a silver case, something doublebarrelled and snub resting between the foam.

"After what 'appened in Yeovil you'll draw one of these out just the bleeding same as anyone else."

"It makes it too easy."

Green looked at me, and even in the darkness I knew his bulldog face would be drawn hard and ruddy. "'Ave it anyway."

One of these days some policeman is going to stop one of Green's people and have *them* for carrying, and if the colonel's really unlucky the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment at Fort Halstead are going to get their hands on it before we can intervene.

With a shudder the DAIRY's lift spirited me past our missile silo and deposited me inside the Super-Loo opposite Charring Cross station. I made a theatrical show of fiddling with my flies as I left.

Mixing in with the German and Japanese tourists I drifted with the gentle osmosis of the crowd in the general direction of Oxford street. A pale faced grandfather in a beret pointed his camera towards me, and I wondered if he might not be a servant or observer for the Others. He had a scowl on his face and was calling something like "Dieter, Dieter."

DAIRY personnel have occasionally worked with compatible interests on a...shall we say higher level, so we have certain resources to call upon. A flash of the German's memory flared in my consciousness. A teenager, his plane jolting in the storm of tracers, eyes pressed close to the cold glass of a primitive sight while bloated six-ton eggs tumbled towards the streetmap below. No, not a streetmap, the Victoria and Albert docks at night. Fifty-odd years ago he had pissed in his pants, and the bitterness of his survival was palpable.

As quickly as it struck the memory passed, and I found myself stationary, zen-like, a statue among the business suits and mainland Europeans. A tourist after all, then.

It just wasn't a good practice to let your-

self get taken on film like that, so I projected a thick rainbow-like moiré pattern, wiping the 6mm section of Fujitsu film where my tanned features had been captured. I left him the shots of Nelson's column and Buck house.

Green's list was extensive, just what I had come to expect of the efficient little thug. It didn't look good. There was an EEC summit being hosted in Wembley almost all week, a cabinet meeting scheduled for 2 p.m., even the Commons would be in a full and apnetic sitting, debating the proposed VAT extensions. London University was holding an international research conference for scientific cross-fertilisation, and Green had indicated that one of the seminars there would play a crucial role in a cold fusion breakthrough due to occur at Caltech on Monday the 12th of March 2004 AD.

I could feel the dent in realitymass, Spooner's presence gently tugging away at the strands of probability and potential. A twitch here, a twitch there. I changed direction with each pulse, through the street performers and debts of Covent Garden, then north along the bookshop heavy length of Charring Cross road.

As I walked I wondered where Benjamin Spooner Briggs had been since the 19th century, what sights he's seen. If he was conscious of what he was doing, who he was working for. If it was indeed Spooner at all.

In New Oxford Street I saw the first sign of Spooner. An old twin engined prop plane was sitting there blocking the facing traffic, the white registration numbers were R325. Interesting, a Lockheed Electra, that was Amelia Rhinehart's ill-fated plane.

A line of black cabs stacked back to the Midland bank were trumpeting their horns like a herd of rogue elephants in a kill frenzy, but it was a pretty pointless reaction as the cockpit was empty.

I seemed to remember having read a file that said Rhinehart had been kidnapped by a Japanese immortal called Tantei something. Chinese takeaway name, like they all had.

Rhinehart certainly wasn't flying that baby goony bird. She had been accidentally killed in a botched rescue attempted, mounted in 1965, for reasons best known to themselves, by M16 and freelance elements of the Special Air Service.

Outside the gaudy glass front of the Vir-

gin Megastore Oxford Circus and I knew I was on the right trail. Two security men were holding down a struggling girl. She was quite gorgeous, in a dyed-blond sort of way, full pouting lips like a Bardot, long tanned legs thrashing out of floral print georgette shorts. She was also speaking in tongues. The dialect, which was her own, was middle class Guildford, the language, which certainly wasn't, I judged to be Northern Sumerian, circa 2001 BC.

A bag full of compact disks had spilled across the pavement. Her taste it seemed ran to Waldeufel, the Skaters' Waltz. That surprised me, she didn't seem the type. Just goes to show you.

The weight of reality shifted minutely again, like a pebble rolling across a silk sheet, caressing my senses. Before I turned towards Soho I stimulated a gland in the girl's neck, producing a weak LSD-analog.

In New Oxford Street I saw the first sign of Spooner. An old twin engined prop plane was sitting there blocking the facing traffic, the white registration numbers were R325.

Interesting, a Lockheed Electra, that was Amelia Rhinehart's ill-fated plane.

She had stopped speaking Sumerian and was gazing up red-faced at Branson's uniformed rent-a-toughs by the time I cut through the traffic.

Long since emptied and drained of it's sleeze, Soho had been transformed, filled with houses that engaged in far subtler forms of whoring: the marble palaces of advertising agencies, publishing houses and film production companies. Al fresco bars and cafés (which had indeed earned their accent) spilled tables out across the pavement while the fashionably wealthy lounged back in raybans and sipped Sol from fluted glasses. Oh, and the women, the women, as curved and elegant as any café wineglass. Like thoroughbreds prancing the field at Ascot, swans in culotte dresses and sarong microskirts. They had used their beauty like currency, and

bought out any and all ugliness for blocks around.

In the green cool of the new Marks and Spencer the spoor of cap'n Spooner's trail had become visible once more. Shoppers in the food section had undergone a spontaneous conversion to militant Islam, and having covered their faces with recyclable paper bags were noisily stoning counter staff and unaffected customers. Spooner's wash was becoming more powerful, so I used my Parker to put a call back to command for a cleanup unit. I disliked using the pen immensely, some hippy engineer in the DAIRY had obviously been inflicted with one too many Napoleon Solo adventures back in the sixties.

Coming down towards Chinatown the backwash was looking worse. A maroon Lancia Dedra turbo sat stalled in the road, and the RAC biker poking around under the

I recognized the type, it came from a paraverse where the Laconians had overrun and supplanted the fledgling Roman empire in 122 BC. The traffic meters along Orange Street were only accepting New Confederate dollars stamped with the head of president galvanised bonnet looked shocked to find the 2-litre twin cam engine had been replaced by a nickel cadmium chemical motor. I recognized the type, it came from a paraverse where the Laconians had overrun and supplanted the fledgling Roman empire in 122 BC. The traffic meters along Orange Street were only accepting New Confederate dollars stamped with the head of president Davis, but that was okay, because Orange street seemed to have been renamed Old Texas Avenue.

Trafalgar Square seemed normal enough, a Jesus freak was perched crow-like on a wall by the National Gallery. Flinging down insults and warnings of apocalypse, the vagrant was wobbling in and out of a rambling discourse. How god hated us all and by the will of the Lord, England would surely drown in a sea of

its own filth.

That was rubbish of course. Because I've met him, or should that be her, and nothing like that was said. God looked like Julia Roberts last time I had the pleasure. I think he/she/it must have seen *Pretty Women*, because the Roberts projection had been dressed in a hooker-red Ottoman jacket.

It wasn't all of god of course, you couldn't meet god in his/her/its entirety, nothing remotely sentient living in the third's got anything like the necessary terms of reference. Just a sub-routine that looks after local affairs--but really most impressive for all of that.

It was at the traffic lights by the Strand, I was watching some human wreckage picking through the bins outside the Pizza Hut. I hate that. That somebody should have so very little. Outside or in.

I was stuck by a feeling of closeness then, the weight on the unmeasurable sheet of spacestuff getting noticeably heavier. Whatever it was, it was going to happen very shortly, so I shouldn't have filled the tramp's binliner with fifty pound notes. That was unnecessary, and he was old, probably one of the hopeless cases who'd blow it all on white spirit and cigarettes. And locating the Bank of England reserves was no mean feat when I should have been saving myself for the job. Still, I've espoused zen enough to want to stay close to the cycle of life--what goes around comes around as they say.

Spooner was south of the river. I didn't ask why. So all the seats of power are based in the City with a capital C, and anywhere below Southwark bridge was queuing up in line for the next innercity riot. It won't be the first time, or the last, that a Prime Minister's risen out of the asbestos-dust hell of one of those concrete rabbit hutches. I think the Colonel's even got the relevant term dates stored on his Apple Macintosh PowerBook.

Spooner's weight had settled over the Southbank area, the density slowly increasing in a measurable cycle of escalation. I felt it like the pressure of a migraine.

Crossing the footpath behind Embankment tube I passed over the Thames, green like a sick sherry, low and shallow in the summer heat and sliding beneath me, being sucked towards the power locus of the NatWest tower.

My suspicions were proved correct, the

ones which had been nagging me since Pall Mall. It was the concrete citadel of the Southbank centre, Fort Art holding the circling assassins of satellite TV and Kylie Minogue back from the last wagon of western civilization.

I went around the back way. There were two security guards lying dead by a black hill of binliners. It was small wonder they were dead, they appeared to be red furred Artiosaurs, what the Homalocephalids of the Cretaceous period would have evolved into if the comet hadn't hit when it did.

Even to my jaded eye, intelligent dinosaurs in blue security uniforms looked rather inappropriate, so I put in the last call of the day to command.

They'd need to leak the story to the Sunday Sport to debunk this one. Southbank bouncers turn into lizard creatures from outer space would do the trick; I can't think what we would do without the paper anymore. We could never have covered up that SS cloning unit in Minsk for a start. Nearly been by first assignment too.

Tracking the tension into the main auditorium I discovered a concert. Francesco Molinari Pradelli was guesting a spot with the Rome Opera House orchestra. Fran wasn't conducting opera though, showing off their versatility the ROH were drawing out Bach's Goldberg variations like an ache. There was too much white noise in the concert hall.

I could tell Spooner was here all right. But where? There was no heart, no centre. Just far too much white noise confusing things.

Then I saw him. High on a service gantry. By the spots, pulling a Baker rifle close to his right shoulder, the flintlock which had proved so popular with Wellington's troops. There was an external laser sight tied to it with faded yellow packaging string.

I looked through Spooner's eyes. He had a school party in his sights, the cross hair resting on a plump little girl of about nine devouring a mintchoc chip flavour Cornetto—far more to her taste, I suspected, than the music. I couldn't blame her, some of the articulation sounded over-deliberate and a bit mannered.

A child, a pig-tailed schoolgirl. Will this music inspire you so much, I thought, that you must die now, before you grow up and take the dubious rites of adulthood? A scientist. A lawyer. A world leader. The probabili-



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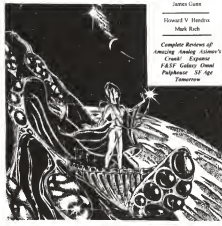
Vol. 1, No. 4

TANGENT

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Several of the reviewers' comments include some rather perceptive thoughts that were helpful to me as a writer.
- James David Audlin

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ties were tightening like a vice, I saw them in my mind's eye, an Intercity 125 express hurtling towards the end of the track.

In retrospect it was just as well Green had insisted on the gun. T'ai Chi Chuan and the other soft ways are excellent in most circumstances, but they wouldn't have brought Spooner down from that gantry before he squeezed a shot off. And I'm sure he would have been protected from all the other powers that had been put at my disposal.

It was clumsy and brutal, but I could honestly think of no other way at that moment.

Taking the weapon I thumbed the hush mode on. The silencer worked like the pilot headphones of the planet's more recent aerial fighters, fed a scream of anti-noise through external grip-mounted speakers to cancel out the explosion. Which was just as well because I had used it once on a firing range hidden two miles underneath Pimlico and it was a cannon--designed for maniacs like my sometimes partner Penny Black.

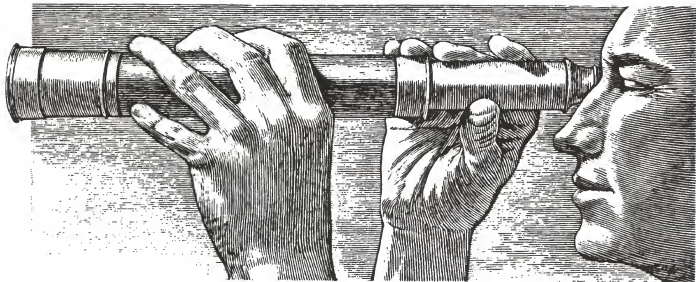
Unlike Spooner's gun my lasersight was integral and I rested the deadly bead of helium-stimulated light on his head. Internal shock absorbers stopped the gun breaking my wrist when I fired, while Spooner's angular face exploded in a crack of blood, sideburns and neural tissue.

If he was a copy he was a very organic one. Lots of mess. And if that was the real Spooner it could well have been the second time he died, so I closed in to make sure. Things can get tricky in situations like that, complicated. And I didn't want to take the chance of him popping back up again like some Glen Close clone from *Fatal Attraction*.

But it was fine, he was lying headless on the gantry and the weight had gone for now. Whatever odyssey had brought Spooner here had ended in a splash of flesh to the Sunrise from Also sprach Zarathustra. The terrific metal vibrato of Italian brass instruments.

I suppose I should have left then to make sure that cleanup were, as Green would say, "doing the necessities."

But I so rarely get the chance to listen to Strauss, especially from the fresh perspective of a nine year-old genius. Potentials and probabilities fanned out in front of me again, opening up like god's own cherry blossom. ■



Maldev pulled back from the telescope and shook her head, blinking feverishly in a vain attempt to clear the ominous vision which had already become permanently etched in her mind. She told herself with a disbelieving laugh that it couldn't be, that the odds against such an occurrence were so astronomically high that they could be ignored. But the gnawing in her stomach told her that neither she nor anyone else on Casenga would be able to ignore the coming cataclysm, long odds or not.

She slowly moved back into position over the

whispered a quick good-bye. More than anything else she wanted to be with them now, facing the end together. Of course, she was probably the first to realize the end was at hand. Maybe it was better that Casenga would be snuffed out so suddenly. A long, drawn-out approach by the planet would only allow each Casengian to experience anxiety, fear, and the utter feeling of helplessness that ate at Maldev. It was probably kinder that people wouldn't know until the last instant.

She looked through the hole in the observatory's roof and saw the planet as it horned-in, merciless

Worlds Apart?

eyepiece, closing her left eye while her right eye absorbed the truth. Another planet, about the same size as Casenga, was headed straight for them. She gasped at the speed with which it approached, and knew the end was imminent.

She walked in a daze toward her desk and plopped into her chair, finding no comfort in its soft, contoured cushions. The feeling of emptiness she felt was like nothing she had ever experienced before, black and bottomless. It all seemed so futile, everything the people of Casenga had done to build their world, all to be wiped out in a fleeting instant, unlucky victims of a cosmic fluke. Even if they could have done something to stop the deadly planet, it would be too late to act now, the collision with the wayward sphere about to happen like a car wreck--suddenly and without sufficient warning.

She gently picked up the photo of her family that rested on her desk, choking back tears while she

by David J. Adams

and swift. Faint screams reached her ears as others saw the fate that would befall Casenga. For some reason she wondered if there were people on that other world, seeing Casenga filling their sky, realizing that they too would be no more. That thought pushed her slightly deeper into her gloom, not that it really mattered how she felt emotionally at the moment. She closed her eyes and waited.

The destruction was perfect and complete, the two bodies smashing into each other and releasing a tremendous burst of energy. Applause began as a smattering and then rose to a crescendo, with subsequent handshakes and pats on the back being shared by all. The first test of the superconducting supercollider had indeed been a great success. ■





SPAWN

BY P. SCHUYLER MILLER

ART BY GEORGE BARR



A colossus of gold strode over the mountains, bent on conquest, and the murdered body of Nicholas Svadin, Dictator of Europe, rose from his bier to rule the world from his palace in Budapest.

Pedants spout glibly of probability, quibble and hedge, gulp at imagined gnats. Nothing is impossible to mathematics. Only improbable. Only very improbable.

Only impossibly improbable.

Earth, for example, is improbable. Planets should not logically exist, nor on existing planets life. Balances of forces are too impossibly delicate; origins too complexly coincidental. But Earth does exist -- and on Earth,

life.

We see Earth and we see life, or we see something, however improbably, and call it Earth and life. We forget probabilities and mathematics and live by our senses, by our common sense. Our common sense sees Earth and it sees life, and in a kind of darkened mirror it sees men -- but men are utterly improbable!

Ooze to worms and worms to fishes. Fishes to frogs and frogs to lizards. Lizards to rats and rats to men, and

men at last to bloated, futuristic Brains. Brains are improbable: brains and senses, and above all, common sense. Not impossible -- because nothing is impossible -- but so improbable that nowhere in all the improbable stars, nowhere in all the improbably empty space between the stars, is there room for other Earths and other rats and men.

Nowhere -- life.

* * * * *

An improbable man is drunk. A man with improbably carrot-colored hair, with an improbably enormous nose. With a cold in that nose. With a quart of potato rotgut to encourage the utter improbability of that cold and that nose, and of the world in general. With a plane's rudder bar under his feet and a plane's stick between his knees, and the Chilean Andes improbably gigantic underneath.

A man is tight. And coincident with that tightness he is witness to the Improbable:

Friday, the 25th of July: James Arthur Donegan, thirty-odd, red-haired, American, has witnessed the Improbable.

A cliff, hard and quartz-white, softening, puddling, pulping away in a vast heaped monstrosity fat with thick ropes of gold. Raw gold, yellow in the Andean sunlight. Mother-gold, knotted in wadded worm-nests in the shining rock. Medusæ of golden fascination. Gold burning in hemp-dream arabesques in the naked cliff-face, in the white quartz that is pulping, dripping, sloughing into monstrosity.

Jim Donegan tipped his bottle high and lifted his plane out of insanity. Jim Donegan's brain reeled with the raw white fire of potato whisky and raw yellow luster of fat gold. And with the gold a quartz cliff melting, puddling -- stone into pudding -- sense into nonsense...

Jim Donegan tipped his bottle again and remembered to forget. Landed in Santiago. Disappeared.

* * * * *

An improbable man is sober. A thousand improbable men and a thousand even less credible women, and of them all only a hundred drunk. Only another hundred tight, or boiled, or mildly bloated. And half a thousand improbable men and women, drunk and sober, see and hear and photograph the Improbable eating whales:

Wednesday, the 20th of August: Richard Chisholm, fifty, grizzled, British, has entered the Improbable in his

log -- has stirred one wrinkled cerebrum, accustomed to the investigation of probabilities, in unaccustomed ways.

Zoölogist Heinrich Wilhelm Sturm leaned with polished elbows on a polished rail and stared at a burnished sea. Daughter Maria Elsa Sturm leaned and stared beside him. Secretary Rudolf Walter Weltmann leaned and stared, but not at waves.

Waves lifted lazily along a great ship's flank. Waves swelled and fell unbroken with listless, oily languor of old dreams. And caught in the warm web of the sun and the malachitic waxiness of the waves a score of whales basked, rolling and blowing, under the weary eyes of Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm.

The molten, lucent fluid of the sea clotted and cooled. Color went swiftly out of it: greenstone to apple jade, jade into chrysoprase, prase into beryl spume. It folded in uneven, glistening hillocks of illogical solidity. And Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm choked on his German oaths as a score of drowsing whales fought suddenly with death!

Acres of empty sea became quivering pulp. Gray puffs of it pushed out of the waves and sank again. Horrible, avid ripples shuddered and smoothed across its sleekness. And twenty whales were caught: gigantic, blunted minnows wallowing in a pudding mold; titanic ebon microbes studding an agar bowl. Drowned by the gray-green stuff that oozed into their gullets and choked their valved blowholes! Strangled and stifled by it.

Swallowed and eaten by it!

The sound of it was unreal -- the whoosh of blown breath splattering jellied ooze, the soft, glutting gurgle of flowing pulp, the single souging sob as giant flukes pulled loose to fling aloft and smash into the rippled greenness that was darkening with the shadow of the ship.

One last sucking sight -- he fling of one mighty glistening *upsilon* against the sky -- the babble of half a thousand human beings gulping breath. And Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm, staring through thick, dark lenses at the blob of gray-green jelly on his wrist, at the spatter of jelly on the deck at his feet, and swearing happily his guttural German oaths...

* * * * *

*A dead man lay in state.
And I was there:*

Friday, the 22nd of August: Nicholas Svadin lies for the third day in solemn state before the people of the world.

Nicholas Svadin, Dictator of Mittel-Europa, lay waxen white under the heaped callas, under the August sun of Budapest. Nicholas Svadin, son of Slavic butcher,

grandson of German führers, lay with six soft-nosed bullets in his skull and breast. Nicholas Svadin, whose genius for government had won the loyalty instead of the hatred of nations, whose greed had fed on the conflict of languages and races, whose shadow had covered Europe from the Volga to the Rhine. Nicholas Svadin, who had held all Europe under his humane tyranny save for the bickering fringe of Latin states and the frozen, watchful silence of the Anglo-Scandinavian confederacy.

Nicholas Svadin, dead in the August sun, with all Europe trembling in metastable balance under the fast-unfolding wings of Chaos.

And four men were the world. And four men were afraid.

They stood as they had stood when Svadin's great rolling voice burst in a bloody cough and his great body, arms upflung in the compassionate gesture of the Cross, slumped like a greasy rag on the white steps of the Peace Hall. They stood with the world before them, and the world's dead master, and the vision of the morrow brooded in their eyes.

Four men were the world: Rasmussen, bearded, blond, steel-eyed premier of Anglo-Scandia; Nasuki at his elbow, little and cunning with the age-old subtlety of the East; Gonzales, sleek, olive-skinned heir of the Neo-Latin dictator; Moorehead the American, lean and white-headed and oldest of the four. Two and two in the August sun with the sickly scent of the death-lilies in their nostrils, and I with my camera marking Time's slow march.

I marked the four where they stood by the open bier. I marked the spilling lines of mourners that flowed in black runnels through the silent streets of Budapest. I marked the priests where they came, slow-treading with the stateliness of an elder civilization.

I marked the resurrection of the dead!

Nicholas Svadin rose on his white-banked bier and stared at the world of men.

Nicholas Svadin rose with the white wax softening in his massive jowls and the round blue scar of a soft-nosed slug between his corpse's eyes. Nicholas Svadin swung his thick legs with an ugly stiffness from the bier and stood alone, alive, staring at mankind, and spoke four words -- once, slowly, then again:

"I--am--Nicholas--Svadin.

"I am Nicholas Svadin!"

And men had found a god.

Svadin had been a man, born of woman, father of men and women, the greatest Earth had known. His genius was for mankind, and he enfolded humanity in his kindly arms and was the father of the world.

Svadin was a man, killed as men are killed, but on the third

ONE WOULD NOT EXPECT TO SEARCH THE PAGES OF *Weird Tales* FOR A LOST TREASURE OF SCIENCE FICTION. SCIENCE FICTION WAS NOT "THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE'S" FORTE. IN ITS TIME (1923 INTO THE 50s, NOW REINCARNATED) IT FEATURED A FAIR AMOUNT OF

sci-fi -- THE INTERSTELLAR ADVENTURES OF "WORLD-WRECKER" EDMOND HAMILTON, SERIALS SUCH AS "RED ETHER," "DROME," "EXPLORERS INTO INFINITY" (RAY CUMMINGS), OTIS ADELBERT KLINE'S BURROUGHSQUE PASTICHE "BUCCANEERS OF VENUS," CATHERINE MOORE'S ASTONISHING WATERSHED WORK IN 1933, "SHAMBLEAU"... BUT IN 1939, THE YEAR OF THE FIRST WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION, THERE BURST UPON THE PAGES OF *Weird Tales* A TALE SO UNUSUAL THAT (UNUSUAL IN ITSELF) IT DID NOT HAVE AN ILLUSTRATION. IT WAS AS IF A. MERRITT ("THE METAL EMPEROR," "THE FACE IN THE ABYSS") HAD COLLABORATED WITH CHARLES "LOI" FORT. IT LED ROBERT BLOCH TO WRITE, "SPEAKING OF DIFFERENT STUFF, *SPAWN* WAS JUST THAT" AND HENRY KUTTNER TO ENTHUSE, "I AM AMAZED, CHARMED AND DELIGHTED. CONGRATS ON YOUR ACUMEN IN BUYING THE EPIS. I ANTICIPATE RE-READING THE TALE MORE THAN ONCE." EDITOR FARNSWORTH WRIGHT INFORMED READERS THAT IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR STORY OF THE ISSUE. I CAN ONLY CONJECTURE THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN WIDELY ANTHOLOGIZED IN THE LAST 55 YEARS BECAUSE SCI-FI ANTHOLOGISTS HAVE NOT CONSIDERED *Weird Tales* A LIKELY SOURCE FOR MEMORABLE SCIENCE FICTION STORIES.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER IS MAINLY REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED SF BOOK REVIEWERS OF ALL TIMES IN THE PAGES OF WHAT TODAY IS *ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION*.

AFTER THIS MASTERPIECE RE-APPEARS, PERHAPS HIS NAME WILL BE SOUGHT MORE FREQUENTLY FOR FUTURE ANTHOLOGIES.

day he rose from his bed of death and cried his name aloud for the world to hear.

Svadin the man became Svadin the god.

I photographed the world-assembly at Leningrad when Svadin called together the scientists of the Earth and gave them the world to mold according to their liking. I marked the gathering in America's halls of Congress when the rulers of the world gave their nations into his bloodless hands and received them again, reborn into a new order of democracy. I watched, and my camera watched, as the world poured itself into these new-cut patterns of civilization and found them good. And then, because men are men and even a Golden Age will pall at last, I turned to other things:

A bathysphere torn from its cable in mid-deep.



Forrest J. Ackerman selects...

Fishing-fleets returning with empty holds after weeks and months at sea.

Eels gone from their ancient haunts, and salmon spawning in dozens where once streams had been choked with their lusting bodies.

Catchships lost in mid-Atlantic, and then a freighter, and another, gone without a trace.

Two men and a girl whose names were on the rolls of every ship that crossed and recrossed the haunted waters of the North Atlantic.

And from the South vague rumors of a god.

Miami's sun-bathed beaches were black with human insects. Miami's tropic night throbbed with the beat of music and the sway and glide of dancers. Maria Elsa Sturm glided and swayed in the strong, young arms of Rudolf Weltmann and laughed and with her night-blue eyes and poppy lips, but Heinrich Sturm stood alone in the star-strewn night and stared broodingly at the sleeping sea. Maria basked in the smoldering noonday sun, a slender golden flame beside the swarthy handsomeness of her companion, but the old masked eyes of Heinrich stared beyond her beauty at the sea.

Long waves swelled sleepily against the far blue of the Gulf Stream and sank and swelled again and creamed in tepid foam along the sands. Gay laughter rippled and prismatic color played with kaleidoscopic lavishness under the golden sun. Wave after wave of the sea, rising and falling and rising against the sky -- and a wave that did not fall!

It came as the others had come, slowly, blue-green and glistening in the sunlight. It rose and fell with the ceaseless surge of the Atlantic at its back, and rose again along the white curve of the beach. It was like a wall of water, miles in length, rushing shoreward with the speed of a running man. Men ran from it and were caught.

Spots of bright color spun in its sluggish eddies and went down. Tongues of it licked out over the warm sands, leaving them naked and bone-white, and flowed lazily back into the monstrous thing that lay and gorged in the hot sun.

It was a sea-green tumulus, vast as all ocean. It was a league-long hillock of green ooze, apple-jade-green, chrysoprase-green, gray-green of frosted flint. It was a thing of Famine -- not out of Bibles, not out of the histories of men -- a thing that lay like a pestilence of the sea upon the warm, white beaches of Miami, black with humanity running, screaming, milling -- a thing that was greedy and that fed!

Tatters of bright rag swirled in its sluggish eddies, oozed from its gelid depths; fragments of white bone, chalk-white and etched, rose and were spewed on the white sands. Arms of it flowed like hot wax, knowingly,

hungrily. Veins in it, pale like clear ribbons of white jade in green translucency, ran blossom-pink, ran rose, ran crimson-red.

Maria Elsa Sturm lay in the white sand, in the warm sun, in the strong arms of swarthy Rudolf Weltmann, under the unseeing eyes of Heinrich Sturm. Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm woke to the world with horror in his eyes, horror in his brain, shrieking horror came stark into his life. Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm saw tongues of the green sea-stuff licking over Miami's bone-white sands, supping up morsels of kicking life, spewing out dead things that were not food. Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm saw the Incredible, mountain-high, suck up the golden straw that was Maria Sturm, suck up the brown, strong straw that was Rudolf Weltmann, swell like a flooding river against the sea-wall at his feet, purling and dimpling with greedy inner currents; saw it ebb and lie drowsing, relishing its prey; saw the bright, scarlet rag that had wrapped Maria Sturm oozing up out of its green horridness; saw the black rag that had clothed Rudolf; saw two white, naked skulls that dimpled its glistening surface before they were sloughed away among tide-rows of eaten bones.

League-long and hill-high the wave that was not a wave lay glutting on young flesh, supping up hot blood. League-long and hill-high, with the little insect myriads of mankind running and screaming, standing and dying; with the buzzing wings of mankind circling over it and men's little weapons peppering at its vast, full-fed imperturbability. Bombs fell like grain from a sower's fist, streaming shadows of them raining out of the bare blue sky. Vast sound shattered the ears of gaping men, crushing in windows, shaking down ceilings, thundering with boastful vengeance.

Fountains of green jelly rose stringily; wounds like the pit of Kimberly opened and showed sea-green, shadowed depths, stirring as the sea stirs, closing as the sea closes, with no scar. Bricks crumbled in little streams from a broken cornice, glass tinkled from gaping windows; men milled and babbled and stared in fascination at Death. And Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm stood alone, a gray old rock against which the scrambling tide beat and broke, seeing only the golden body of Maria Elsa Sturm, the laughing, up-turned face of Maria Elsa Sturm, the night-blue eyes and poppy lips of Maria Elsa Sturm...

Long waves swelled sleepily against the far blue of the Gulf Stream, and sank and swelled again, and creamed in soft foam against the bone-white sands. Wave after wave, rising and falling and rising higher with the flooding tide. Waves rising to lap the sea-green tumulus, to bathe its red-veined monstrousness, whose crimson rills were fading to pink, to gray, to luent white. Waves laving it, tickling its monstrous palate, pleasing it mightily; waves into which it subsided and left Miami's white beaches naked for a league save for the

windrows of heaped bones and the moist, bright rags that had been men's condescension to the morality of men.

Cameras ground clickingly along that league-long battlefield while Horror fed; microphones fathered the scream of the sight of Death from a thousand quavering lips -- but not mine.

Men turned away, sickened, to turn and stare again with horrid fascination at the wet white windrows that were girls' bones, and men's bones, and children's -- but not I.

Other eyes saw that vision of the Incredible; other lips told me of it when I asked. I did not see Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm when he turned his back on the drift of smiling skulls and went wearily with the human stream, when he paid with creased and hoarded notes the accounts of Maria Elsa Sturm, deceased, of Rudolf Walter Weltmann, deceased, of Heinrich Wilhelm Sturm.

I did not see Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm when he stepped out of the hotel with his battered suitcase, plastered with paper labels, his round black hat, his thick dark glasses, and disappeared.

No one who saw now.

There was no one, now, to care...

* * * * *

Out of the South the rumor of a god!

Out of the Andes word of a god of Gold, stalking the mountain passes with Wrath and Vengeance smoking in his fists. A god wrathful in the presence of men and the works of men. A god vengeful of man's slavery of rock and soil and metal, jealous of man's power over the inanimable. A god growing as the mountains grow, with bursting, jutting angularities shifting, fusing, molding slowly into colossal harmonies of form and function, with growing wisdom in his golden skull and growing power in his crystal fists. A god for the weak, contemptuous of the weak but pitiless to the strong -- straddling adobe huts to trample the tin-roof huddle of shacks at the lip of some gaping wound in the ancient flesh of Earth.

A god with power tangible and cruel, alien to puling doctrines of white men's love of men. A god speaking voicelessly out of the distance of things that awoke old memories, roused old grandeurs in the blood of small brown men and in other men in whose veins the blood of brown kings flowed.

A god of red justice. A god of Revolution!

A god to bring fear again to men!

In the South -- Revolution. Little brown men swarming in the mountains, pouring into the valleys,

hacking, clubbing, stabbing, burning. Revolution in small places without names. Revolution in mud villages with names older than America. Revolution flaming in towns named in the proud Castilian tongue -- in cities where white women promenaded and white men ogled, and brown men were dust in the gutters. Revolution in Catamarca, in Tucuman, in Santiago del Estero. Revolution half a thousand miles away, in Potosí, in Cochabamba, in Quillacolla. Revolution stalking the up-thrusting spine of a continent like a pestilence, sucking in crazed brown warriors from the *montes*, from the *pampas*, from barren deserts and steaming jungles. Blood of brown ancestors rising beneath white skins, behind blue eyes. Revolution like a flame sweeping through brown man and white and mostly-white and half-white and very-little-white and back to the brown blood of ancient, feathered kings! Guns against machetes. Bayonets against razor-whetted knives. Poison gas against poison darts.

And in their wake the tread of a god of Gold!

Revolution out of Chile, out of Argentine, into Bolivia, into Peru of the Incas. Revolution out of the hot inland trough of the Amazon, rippling through Brazil, through the Guianas, into Ecuador, into Colombia, into Venezuela. Revolution choking the ditch of Panama, heaping the bigger ditch of Managua with bleeding corpses, seething through the dark forests of Honduras, Guatemala, Yucatan. A continent overwhelmed and nothing to show why. A continent threatened, and only the whispered rumor of a god of Gold!

Men like me went to see, to hear, to tell what they had seen and heard. Men like me crept into the desolate places where Revolution had passed, and found emptiness, found a continent trampled under the running, bleeding feet of a myriad of small brown men driven by a Fear greater than the fear of Death -- crushed and broken under the relentless, marching hooves of the god of Gold.

A village, then a city -- a nation, then a continent -- and the armies of the white nations mobilizing along the border of Mexico, in the arid mountains of the American Southwest, watching -- waiting -- fearing none knew what. A necklace of steel across the throat of the white man's civilization.

Repeated circumstance becomes phenomenon; repeated phenomena are law. I found a circumstance that repeated again and again, that became phenomenal, that became certainty. A man with red hair, with a bulbous nose, with a bird's knowledge of the air, and an old man, peering through thick glasses, muttering in his beard. How they came together no man knew. Where they went men could only guess. The wings of their giant plane slid down out of the sunset, rose black against the sunrise, burned silver-white in the blaze of noon. They went -- they returned -- and none questioned their coming or going.

War on the edge of America. War between white men and brown -- and more than man behind the brown. Death rained from the sky on little brown men scattering in open deserts, on green jungles where brown men might be lurking, on rotten rock where brown men might have tunneled. Death poisoned the streams and the rock-hewn *cenotes*; death lay like a yellow fog in the arroyos and poured through gorges where brown men lay hidden behind rocks and in crannies of the rock. Flame swept over the face of Mexico and the brown hordes scattered and gave way in retreat, in flight, in utter rout. White fury blazed where brown hatred had smoldered. Brown bodies sprawled flayed and gutted where white corpses had hung on wooden crosses, where white hearts had smoked in the noon sun and white men's blood had dribbled down over carved stone altars. Hell followed Hell.

Then from Tehuantepec a clarion challenge, checking the rout, checking the white wave of vengeance. The challenge of a god!

Planes droned in the bare blue sky over Oaxaca, riding the mountain with death. Polite, trim generals sat and drank and talked in half a dozen languages wherever there was shade. The sun blazed down on the plaza of Oaxaca in the time of *siesta*, and the grumble of war sank to a lullaby. Then out of the mountains of the east, rolling and rocking through the naked hills, sounded the shouted challenge of the god of Gold!

I heard it like a low thunder in the east, and a German major at the next table muttered "*Donner!*" I heard it again. A Frenchman beside him looked up a moment from his glass. It came a third time, growling against the silence, and the roaring like the voice of Bashan in the sky, and all up and down the shaded plaza men were listening and wondering.

Far away, across the mountains in Tehuantepec, the guns began to thud and mutter, and in the radio shack behind us a telegraph key was clicking nervously. The Frenchman was listening, his lips moving. An English lieutenant strode in out of the sun, saluted, melted into the shadow of the colonnade.

Out of the East the challenge of a god!

I heard the triumphant, bull-bellied shout thundering across the ranges as the guns of Tehuantepec grumbled for the last time. I saw a light that should not be there -- a mad, fanatic light -- gleaming in the eyes of an officer of Spanish name, from the Mexican province of Zacatecas. The German's eyes were on him, and the Frenchman's and those of the English subaltern, following him as he stole away. The wireless operator came out and saluted, and handed a slip of yellow paper to the Frenchman. He passed it, shrugging, to the German. A

Russian came and looked over his shoulder, an Italian, an American, a Japanese, and their heads turned slowly to listen for the chuck and patter of distant guns that they would never hear again. And then, again, that voice of the mountains bellowed its triumphant challenge, stirring a cold current of dread in my veins -- in the veins of all men of Oaxaca -- of all men who heard it.

The victorious god of Gold shouted his challenge to Mankind, and in answer came the distant burring of a plane in the north.

It passed over us and circled for a landing outside the city. An army car raced away and returned. I knew two of the three men who climbed stiffly out of the tonneau. I saw tall, red-headed air-fiend Jim Donegan. I saw stooped, gray, boggling Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm.

I saw Nicholas Svadin, once-dead master of the world.

Again that bull-throated, brazen thunder rolled across the ranges and I saw Svadin's blunt, hairless skull cocked sidewise, listening. Old Heinrich Sturm was listening too, and Red Jim Donegan. But I saw only Nicholas Svadin.

It was five full years since that August day in Budapest. Wax was heavy in his blue-white jowls. Wax weighted down his heavy-lidded eyes. A puckered blue hole probed his sleek white brow. His great body was soft and bloated and his stubby fingers blue under their cropped nails. There was an acrid odor in the air, the odor that heaped callas had hidden in the sun of Budapest, that not even the stench of a thousand sweating men could hide under the sun of Mexico.

They talked together -- Svadin, the generals Sturm, Red Jim Donegan of Brooklyn. Donegan nodded, went to the waiting car, disappeared into white moonlight. Soon his great silver plane droned overhead, heading into the north.

One day--two--three. We on the outside saw nothing of Svadin, but men of all nations were at work in the blazing sun and the velvet night, sawing, bolting, riveting, building a vast contrivance of wood and metal under the direction of Heinrich Sturm. Four days--five, and at last we stood at the edge of the man-made city of Oaxaca, staring at that monstrous apparatus and at the lone figure that stood beside it -- Svadin. His puffed blue fingers went to the switch on its towering side, and out of that giant thing thundered the bellowed defiance of Mankind, hurled at the giant Thing that walked the ranges, bull-baiting the god of Gold!

Its vast clamor shuddered in the packed earth underfoot. Its din penetrated the wadding in our ears and drummed relentlessly against our senses. It boomed and thundered its contempt, and in answer that other voice thundered beyond the blue-tipped mountains. Hour after hour -- until madness seemed certain and madness was welcome -- until the sun lay low in a red sky, paint-

ing the ranges -- until only Svadin and gray old Heinrich Sturm remained, watching beside their vast, insulting, defiant Voice. Then in the east a flicker of light tipped the farthest ranges!

It was a creeping diamond of light above the purple horizon. It was a needle of white fire rising and falling above the mountains, striding over valleys, vaulting and naked ridges, growing and rising higher and vaster and mightier against the shadow of the coming night. It was a pillar of scintillant flame over Oaxaca.

It was the god of Gold!

Quartz is rock, and quartz is jelly, and quartz is a crystal gem. Gold is metal, and gold is color, and gold is the greed of men. Beauty and fear -- awe and greed -- the Thing over Oaxaca was a column of crystal fires, anthropomorphic, built out of painted needle-gems, with the crimson and blue and smoky wine-hues of colloidal gold staining its jeweled torso -- and veins and nerves and ducts of the fat yellow gold of Earth -- with a puddling of blue quartz flowing and swelling and flexing on its stony frame. It was a giant out of mythery -- a *jinni* out of hasheesh madness -- a monster born of the Earth, thewesh with the stuff of Earth, savagely jealous of the parasitic biped mammals whose form it aped. Its spiked hooves clashed on the mountain-tops with the clamor of avalanches. Its sail-arms swung like a flicking scourge, flaying the bare earth of all that was alive. Its skull was a crystal chalice wadded with matted gold, brain-naked, set with eyes like the blue sapphires of Burma, starred with inner light.

It roared with the thunder of grinding, tearing, grating atoms, with the sullen voice of earthquakes. It was the specter of Earth's last vengeance upon delving, burrowing, gutting little Man, the flea upon her flesh. It stood, a moment, straddling the horizon -- and out of the north a plane was winging, a midge-small against the watching stars. So high it was that though the sun had gone and the shadow of the Earth lay purple on the sky, its wings were a sliver of light, dwindling, climbing to that unimaginable height where the rays of the vanished sun still painted the shoulders of the god of Gold. A plane -- and in its wake another, and another -- a score of whispering dots against the tropic night.

Red Jim Donegan saw the monstrous, faceless visage upturned to watch his coming. He saw the white fires chill in its moon-great eyes, saw vast arm-things forming on its formless body, like swinging ropes of crystal maces. He saw the sinews of massive yellow gold that threaded its bulk, tensing and twisting with life, and the brain of knotted gold that lay in its cupped skull like worms in a bowl of gems. He saw that skull grow vaster as his plane rushed on -- mountain-vast, filling the night

-- saw those star-backed eyes blazing -- saw the evil arms sweeping upward -- then was in empty air, sprawled over vacancy, his ship driving down into that monstrous face, between the staring sapphire eyes.

He swung from a silk umbrella and saw those kraken-arms paw at the crystal skull where a flower of green flame blossomed -- saw the second plane diving with screaming wings -- a third beyond it -- and a fourth. The air was full of the white bubbles of parachutes, sinking into the edge of night. He saw the shadow of the world's edge creeping up over that giant shape, standing spread-legged among the barren hills, a green flame burning in its golden brain, a flame eating quartz as a spark eats tinder, a flame devouring gold, sloughing away crystalline immensity in a rain of burning tears, ever deeper, ever faster, as plane after plane burst with its deadly load against that crystal mass.

In blind, mad torture the god of Gold strode over Oaxaca. Green fire fell from it like blazing snow, pocking the naked rock. One dragging hoof furrowed the rocky earth, uprooting trees, crags, houses, crushing the man-made lure that had dared it to destruction. Fragments of eaten arms crashed like a meteor-fall and lay burning in the night. A moment it towered, dying, over ruined Oaxaca, where Nicholas Svadin stood dwarfed among the shambles of broken houses, the slight, stooped form of Heinrich Sturm beside him. Then in the sky that consuming flame blazed brighter as some vital source was touched. A pillar of licking light wiped out the stars. It took one giant stride, another, and the world shook with the fall of the living mountain that crashed down out of the burning night. Among the eastern hills the fractured limbs of the colossus of the South lay strewn like grain, and in the rocky flank of San Felipe a pit of cold green fire ate slowly toward the heart of Earth.

One who had been a man turned away from that holocaust and vanished in the darkness: Nicholas Svadin, his dead flesh clammy with dew, his gross bulk moving with the stealthy silence of a cat, with Heinrich Sturm trotting after him through the night.

Svadin, who had met the challenge of a god of Gold -- and won!

* * * * *

The Thing of the Sea -- a Thing of the Earth -- a Thing of Men!

Three things outrageous to Man's knowledge of himself and of his world, improbable beyond calculation, impossible if impossibility could exist. Three Things raised from the dead, from the inanimate, from the inanimable, to live, and feed, and stalk the Earth among other things that lived and ate and walked properly, probably, possibly. Three Things that sought the sovereignty of Earth -- a Thing of ravening hunger, a Thing with a hate of men, and a Thing that was god-hero of all men.

One of the three lay destroyed beyond Oaxaca, and the brown men who had done its will were fugitives from vengeance. One still basked and fed in the tropic sea. And the third was Nicholas Svadin.

Rumors spread like ripples in a quiet pool. Even a god grows old. Svadin was a god whose word was law, whose wisdom was more than human, whose brain devised strange sciences, who brought the world comfort and contentment greater than it had ever known. In life he was a genius; dead, a martyr. He rose from the dead, wearing the mark of death, and men worshipped him as a god, saw in him a god's omnipotent wisdom. He remade a world, and the world was content. He slew the giant god of Gold and men followed him like sheep. But there were others who were not impressed by gods, or men like gods, and there were rumors, whisperings, wonderings.

It was my work to hear such rumors, listen to whisperings, tell men the truth about what they wondered.

Few men were close to Svadin, but of those who were, one told strange stories. A man who in other times had made his living on the fruits of such stories. Svadin -- from whom the marks of death had never vanished, though he had risen from the dead -- in whose forehead the puckered mark of a bullet still showed, whose face was white with the mortician's wax, whose fingers were puffed and blue, whose body was a bloated sack, whose flesh reeked with the fluids which preserve corpses; who fed privately, on strange foods, quaffed liquids which reeked as those fluids reeked; who showed strange vacancies of memory, absences of knowledge about common things, yet was a greater genius than in life-before-death; whose only confidant was the mad zoölogist, Heinrich Wilhelm Sturm.

I heard of the strange wicker and elastic form which was made by a craftsman in Vienna and worn under his heavy, padded clothes. I heard of a woman of impressive birth who offered herself as women have -- and of the dull, uncomprehending stare which drove her shivering from his chamber.

I heard of the rats that swarmed in his apartments, where no cat would stay, and of the curious devices he had erected around his bed -- of the day when a vulture settled on his shoulder and others circled overhead, craning their wattled necks.

I saw Nils Svedberg, attaché of the Anglo-Scandian legation in Berlin, when he fired three Mauser bullets into the flabby paunch of the master of the world -- saw too what the crowd discarded when its fanatic vengeance was sated, and children scampered home with bloody souvenirs of what had been a man. I heard Svadin's thick voice as he thanked them.

Rumors -- whisperings -- questions without an answer. Svadin -- to some a god, born into pseudo-human

form, immortal and omnipotent; to some a man, unclean, with the awakening lusts and habits of a man; to some a Thing brought out of Hell and to damn Mankind.

And a Thing of the Sea, feeding in the Caribbean, in the turbid pourings of the Amazon, along the populous coasts of Guiana and Brazil. Devil's Island a graveyard. And at last -- Rio!

A plane with a red-haired, large-nosed American pilot cruised the coasts of South America. A worn, grayed, spectacled old man sat with him, peering down into the shallow, shadowed waters for darker shadows. They marked the slow progress of Death along the tropic coasts, and in Rio de Janeiro, Queen City of the South, the mightiest engineering masterpiece of Man was near completion.

Jim Donegan and Heinrich Sturm watched and carried word of what they saw, while Nicholas Svadin schemed and planned in Rio of the South.

Rio -- rebuilt from the shell of Revolution. Rio fairer than ever, a white jewel against the green breast of Brazil. Rio with her mighty harbor strangely empty, her horseshoe beaches deserted, and across the sucking mouth of the Atlantic a wall, with one huge gateway.

Crowds on the mountainsides, waiting. Drugged carrion bobbing in the blue waters of the harbor -- slaughtered cattle from the Argentine, from America, from Australia -- fish floating white-bellied in the trough of the waves -- dead dogs, dead cats, dead horses -- all the dead of Rio and the South, larded with opiates, rocking in the chopped blue waters of the harbor of Rio de Janeiro. And at the gateway to the sea a glistening greening of the waves -- a slick mound flowing landward between the guarding walls -- a gray-green horror scenting prey. A silver plane above it in the sky. A small black dot on the curved white beach.

Svadin -- and the Thing of the Sea.

Food was offered, and it fed. It poured sluggishly into the great land-locked harbor of Rio. It supped at the meager morsels floating in the sea and flowed on toward the deserted city and the undead man who stood watching it. And as its last glistening pseudopod oozed through the man-made gates, a sigh went up from the people on the mountainsides. Slowly and ponderously the barrier gate slid shut behind it, sealing the harbor from the sea. Great pumps began to throb, and columns of clear green brine of a river's thickness foamed into the unfillable Atlantic.

The plane had landed on the beach and Svadin climbed in. Now it was aloft, circling over the city and

the harbor. The Thing was wary. It had learned, as all preying things learn, that each tiny insect has its sting. It sensed a subtle difference in the tang of the brine in which it lay -- felt a motion of the water as Svadin's colossal pumps sucked at the harbor -- detected a tension in the air. Its eddying lust for flesh quieted. It gathered itself together -- swirled uneasily in the confines of the walled harbor -- lapped questioningly against the rampart that barred it from the Atlantic. Its glistening flanks heaved high out of the blue waters. It gathered itself into a great ball of cloudy jade that rose and fell in the surge of the quiet sea. It lay as a frightened beast lies -- frozen -- but without fear, biding its time.

Day after day after day. Day after day under the burning sun, while curious human mites dotted the Beira Mar, thronged on the white moon-rind beaches -- while devout thousands crammed the Igreja de Penha, spared by Revolution, knelt on its winding stair, prayed and knelt in the many Houses of God of Rio of the South -- while inch by inch and foot by foot the sparkling waters of Rio's mighty harbor sank and the gray-black ooze of the sea floor steamed and stank in the tropic sun, and the vast green Thing from the sea lay drugged amid the receding waters.

Atop hunched Corcovado the majestic Christ of Rio stared down on Mankind and the enemy of Mankind. Atop sky-stabbing Sugarloaf, poised between sea and land, Nicholas Svadin stood and stared, and with him Heinrich Sturm. Above the sinking waters of the bay, great ships of the air droned and circled, dropping the fine, insidious chemical rain that drugged the Thing with sleep. And in the jewel-city below, Ramon Gonzales, human link between the Latin blood of old Europe and new America, stood and stared with burning eyes. Leagues across the oily, sleeping sea three other men stood or sat staring, grim-eyed, into nothing. Moorehead the American. Nasuki the Asiatic. Blond Rasmussen of Anglo-Scandia.

Day after day after day, while the miasmic stench of Rio's draining harbor rose over the white avenues of Rio de Janeiro, while the darkening waters lapped lower and ever lower on the glistening jade-green mountains of jellied ooze that lay cooking in the sun. Day after day after day, while those who had crept back to the Beira Mar, to rock-rimmed Nitheroy, returned to the green, cool hills to watch and wait. A handful of sullen men in the Queen City of the South. Another handful on the naked cap of Sugarloaf and at the feet of the mighty Christ of Corcovado, miraculously untouched by the ravaging of the god of Gold. And above it all the whine and drone of the circling planes and the far, dull mutter of the giant pumps.

Living things acquire a tolerance of drugs, demand more and more and ever more to sate their appetite. Drugged meat had lulled the Thing, and the rain of drugs

from circling planes had kept it torpid, soothed by the slow lap of brine against its gelid flanks, dreaming of future feasts. Now as the waters sank the sun beat down on its naked bulk, the vast Thing roused. Like a great green slug it crept over the white thread of the Beira Mar, into the city of jewels. Buildings crumpled under its weight, walls were burst by the pressure of its questing pseudopods. Into the pockets of the hills it crept, over the broken city, and behind it on the summit of Sugarloaf was frantic activity. Nicholas Svadin's puffed blue hand pointed, and where he gestured a ring of fire slashed across Rio's far-reaching avenues, barring the exit to the sea. Slowly the zone of flame crept inward, toward the empty harbor, and before its fierce heat the Sea-Thing retreated, grinding the city under its slimy mass. Little by little it roused -- its ponderous motions became quicker, angrier. Little by little fear woke in it, where fear had never been -- fear of the little gabbling human things that stung it with their puny weapons. It lay like a glassy blanket over the ruined streets of Rio -- a knot of twisting serpent-forms craving the cool wet blackness of the deep sea. Before its awakened fury the wall across Rio's harbor would be like a twig across the path of an avalanche. Its fringe of lolling tentacles dabbled in the salt-encrusted pool that was all the pumps had left of the Bay of Rio, and in minutes the rippling mirror was gone, sucked into the Sea-Thing's avid mass.

And then Svadin struck.

I stood with my camera beneath the Christ of Corcovado. The sun was setting, and as the shadow of the western summits crept over the gutted Rio, the Sea-Thing gathered itself for the assault that would carry it over Sugarloaf, over the wall that men had made into the welcoming Atlantic. Then in the north, where the sun yet shone, came a flicker of metal gnats against the cloudless sky, the burr of their roaring engines speeding them through the advancing twilight. From Sugarloaf a single rocket rose and burst, a pale star over the sea, showering spangled flame, and the heavens were filled with the thunder of Man's aerial hosts -- bombers, transports, planes of all sizes and all nations in a monster fleet whose shadow lay long on the curling sea like a streamer of darkness. Their first rank swung low over the hollow harbor and out of them grained a curtain of white missiles, minute against the immensity of Rio's circling hills. Like hail they fell, and after them a second shower, and a third as the fleet roared by above. And then the first bombs hit!

A ribbon of fire burst against the twilight. Fountains of golden flame vomited skyward, scores of feet over the naked surface of the Thing. Hundreds -- thousands of bursting dots of fire, sweeping swaths of fiery rain, cas-

cades of consuming flame -- until the Sea-Thing blazed with one mighty skyward-reaching plume of golden glory that licked at the darkening heavens where the wings of Mankind's army of destruction still roared past, the rain of death still fell like a white curtain, painted by the leaping yellow flame of burning sodium.

I saw it then as old Heinrich Sturm had seen it months and years before, as Nicholas Svadin had seen it when he began his colossal plan to bait the Thing into the land-locked bay of Rio de Janiero. Flame, killing and cleansing where no other weapon of Man would serve; green flame devouring the Earth-born god of Gold, corroding its crystal thews and consuming its golden brain; yellow flame feeding on the sea-green pulp of the sea-born Thing -- changing the water that was its life into the caustic venom that slew it. As that colossal golden torch flared skyward over broken Rio I saw the mountainous bulk of the Sea-Thing shrivel and clot into a pulp of milky curds, crusted with burnt alkali. Water oozed from it like whey from pressed cheese, and tongues of the yellow flame licked along it, drinking it up. The black ooze of the harbor was drying and cracking under the fierce heat. Palms that still stood along the bare white beaches were curling, crisping, bursting into splinters of red flame, and even against the rising breeze the steaming stench of cooked flesh reeked in our nostrils.

The murmur of voices behind me stilled. I turned. The crowd had given way before the little knot of men who were coming toward me, driven from the crest of Sugarloaf by the fierce heat of the burning Thing. Flame-headed, red-nosed Donegan pushing a way for those who followed him. Gray-whiskered Heinrich Sturm pattering after him. Behind them, surrounded by men in braided uniforms, the fish-white, corpse-flesh shape of Nicholas Svadin.

I gave no ground to them. I stood at the Christ's feet and gave them stare for stare. I stared at Red Jim Donegan, at Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm, and I stared at the gross, misshapen thing that was master of the world.

I had not seen him since that night in Oaxaca, three years before. He had been hideous then, but now the scent and shape of Death were on him as they were on Lazarus when he arose blank-eyed from the grave. A gray cloak swirled from his shoulders and fell billowing over a body warped and bloated out of all human semblance. Rolls of polished flesh sagged from his face, his neck, his wrists. His fingers were yellow wads of sickening fat, stained with blue, and his feet were clumping pillars. Out of that pallid face his two bright eyes peered like raisins burnt glassy and stuck in sour dough. The reek of embalming fluids made the air nauseous within rods of where he stood. Nicholas Svadin! Living dead man -- master of the world.

I knew Donegan from Oaxaca. He told me what I had guessed. Old Sturm's researches, made on bits of the

jelly left by the Thing, on fragments hewed from it by volunteers, showed it to be built largely of linked molecules of colloidal water. Water-stuff of the sea -- bound by the life-force into a semblance of protoplasm -- into a carnate pulp that fed on living flesh for the needful elements that the waters could not give it. Living water -- mountain-huge -- destroyed by decomposing forces that no water could quench -- by bombs of metallic sodium, tearing apart the complex colloidal structure of its aqueous flesh and riving it into flames of burning hydrogen and crusting, jelling alkali. Chemical fire, withering as it burnt.

I knew, too, Ramon Gonzales. I had seen him when he stood beside Svadin's bier in the sun of Budapest -- when Svadin gave him the united Latin states of two continents to govern -- when he stood ankle-deep in the green slime that the Sea-Thing had left coating the white walls of gutted Rio. I saw him now, his dark face ghastly in the yellow glare, screaming accusations at the immobile, pasty face of Nicholas Svadin. Those button eyes moved, flickering to observe him; the shapeless bulk gathered its cloak closer about it and swiveled to consider him. Higher and higher Gonzales' hysterical voice raged -- cursing Svadin for the doom he had brought on Rio, cursing him for the thing he had been as a man and for the thing he was now. No sign of understanding showed on that bloated face -- no sign of human feeling. I felt a tension in the air, knew it was about to break. My camera over Jim Donegan's shoulder saw Ramon Gonzales as his sword lashed out, cutting through Svadin's upflung arm, biting deep into his side, sinking hilt-deep in his flesh. I saw its point standing out a foot behind that shrouded back, and the flare of Jim Donegan's gun licked across my film as he shot Gonzales down. I saw, too, the thick, pale fluid dripping slowly from the stump of Svadin's severed arm, and the puffed, five-fingered thing that twitched and scrabbled on the gravel at his feet.

Above us, lit by the dying yellow flame, the Christ of Corcovado looked down on the man who had risen from the dead to rule the world.

* * * * *

Four men were the world when Svadin rose from the dead in Budapest. Nasuki, Rasmussen, Gonzales, Moorehead. Gonzales was dead.

Two men had stood at Svadin's side when he slew the Thing of the Earth and the gelid Thing of the Sea. Donegan, Heinrich Sturm. Sturm alone remained.

I showed the pictures I had taken on Corcovado to drawn faced Richard Moorehead in the White House at

Washington, I showed them to Nasuki in Tokyo and to Nils Rasmussen in London. I told them other things that I had seen and heard, and gave them names of men who had talked and would talk again. I wore a small gold badge under my lapel -- a badge in the shape of the *crux ansata*, the looped Egyptian cross of natural, holy Life.

I went to find Jim Donegan before it should be too late. It was too late. Since the morning of the day when Nicholas Svadin's silver plane slipped to the ground at the airport of Budapest, and Svadin's closed black limousine swallowed him and Donegan and Heinrich Sturm, the tall, red-haired American had not been seen. Sturm was there, close to Svadin, with him day and night, but no one could speak with him. And gradually he too was seen less and less as Svadin hid himself in curtained rooms and sent his servants from the palace, drew a wall of steel around him through which only Zoölogist Heinrich Sturm might pass.

Something was brewing behind that iron ring -- something that had been boding since long before Svadin stood in Oaxaca and lured the god of Gold to its death -- since long before he was first approached by the bearded, spectacled little German scientist who was now the only man who saw him or knew that he was alive. Yet Svadin's orders went out from the great, empty palace in Budapest, and the world grew sullen and afraid.

When he was newly risen from the bier, Nicholas Svadin had in him the understanding of a leader of Mankind and the genius of a god. Men took him for a god and were not betrayed. He thought with diamond clearness, saw diamond-keenly the needs and weaknesses of men and of men's world. He made of the world a place where men could live happily and securely, without want, without discomfort -- and live as men.

As the months went by Svadin had changed. His genius grew keener, harder, his thinking clearer. Scientist-economist-dictator -- he was all. The things he ordained, and which men throughout the world did at his command, were things dictated by reason for the good of the human race. But at the same time humanity had gone out of him.

Never, since that day when the heaped callas fell from his stiffly rising frame in the sun of Budapest, had he spoken his own name. He was Svadin, but Svadin was not the same. He was no longer a man. He was a machine.

Conceivably, a machine might weigh and balance all the facts governing the progress and condition of one man or of all humanity, and judge with absolute, mathematical fairness what course each should take in order that the welfare of all should be preserved. If it meant death or torment for one, was that the concern of the man? If a city or a nation must be crushed, as Rio had been crushed, to wipe out a monstrous Thing that was preying on Mankind, should not Rio rejoice at its chance



to be the benefactor of the race? No man would say so. But Svadin was not a man. What he was -- what he had become -- it was the purpose of the League of the Golden Cross to discover.

No movement is greater than its leaders. Those who wore the looped cross of Life were led by the three men to whom the world looked, next to Svadin, for justice -- to whom they looked, in spite of Svadin, for human justice. Before he rose from his bier, they had ruled the world. It was their intention to rule it again.

No lesser men could have planned as they planned, without Svadin's knowledge, each last step of what must happen. That things went otherwise was not their fault -- it was the fault of the knowledge that they had, or their interpretation of that knowledge. I had not yet found Jim Donegan. I had not seen Heinrich Sturm.

Through all the world the seeds of revolt were spreading, deeper and farther than they had spread among the little brown-blooded men who were rallied by fear of the gold of Gold. But throughout all the world those seeds fell on the fallow soil of fear -- fear of a man who had risen from death -- of a man who was himself a god, with a god's power and a god's unseeing eye, with a god's revenge. Men -- little superstitious men in thousands and millions, feared Svadin more than they hated him. At his word they would slay brothers and cousins, fathers and lovers, friends and foe alike. Reason and justice meant nothing to them. There must be a greater fear to drive them -- and it was my job to find that fear.

In every place where Svadin had his palaces, his steel-jacketed guards, I peered and pried, watching for the sight of a red head, an improbably distorted nose. And not for a long, long time did I find it.

Svadin's grim castle loomed among weedy gardens above Budapest. I found old men who had planted those gardens, others who had laid them out, who had built their drains and sunk the foundations of the palace in a day before Svadin was born. Where only rats had gone for a generation, I went. Where only rats' claws had scabbled, my fingers tapped, pressed, dug in the fetid darkness. Ladders whose iron rungs had rusted to powder bore my weight on the crumbling stumps of those rungs. Leaves that had drifted for years over narrow gratings were cleared away from beneath, and light let in. The little Egyptian *ankh* became the symbol of a brotherhood of moles, delving under the foundations of Nicholas Svadin's mighty mausoleum. And one day my tapping fingers were answered!

Tap, tap, tap through the thick stone -- listen and tap, tap and listen. More men than Donegan had disappeared, and they crouched in their lightless cells and listened to our questions, answered when they could, guided the slow gnawing of our drills and shovels through the rock under Budapest. Closer -- closer -- they had their ways of speaking without words, but no word came

from the red-headed, big-nosed American of whom their tapping told. Something prevented -- something they could not explain. And still we dug, and tapped, and listened, following their meager clues.

There came a time when we lost touch with the world outside. Three of us, in a world of our own, forgot that there was an outside, that there was anything but the one great purpose that drove us on through the dark and the damp. We had no word of the world, nor the world of us.

Nasuki grew impatient, and the man who was in Gonzales' place. The work of the Golden Cross was progressing, its ring of rebellion strengthening. To Rasmussen, to Moorehead, they cried for action. The brooding stillness that lay over Svadin's palace, the brutal coldness of the orders that issued through Heinrich Sturm's lips, shaping the civilization of a world as a sculptor would chisel granite, drove them to the edge of madness. Revolution flamed again -- and this time brother was pitted against brother all across the face of the planet -- fear against fury -- Svadin against the Four.

I have seen pictures of the Svadin whom that flame of war drew to the balcony of his palace, to shout his thunderous command of death above the kneeling throng. The disease, if disease it was that changed him, was progressing swiftly. There was little resemblance to the man who lay dead a handful of years before, and on whom life fell out of an empty sky. He was huge, misshapen, monstrous, but so utter was their fear and awe that those groveling thousands questioned no word of his and cut down their kin as they would reap corn. The looped cross was an emblem of certain death. Men cast it from them, forswore its pledge, betrayed others who were faithful. At last one desperate, embattled horde stormed the grim castle above Budapest, while the sullen ring of the faithful closed in around them. Under their feet, ignorant of what was happening above us, we three dug and tapped, tapped and dug -- and found!

I remember that moment when I knelt in the stuffy darkness of the tunnel, digging my fingers into the cracks on either side of that massive block. For hours, two sleeping while one worked, we had chiseled at it, widening the crevices, carving a grip, loosening it from the bed in which it had been set a lifetime before. My numbed fingers seemed to become part of the cold stone. Dunard was tugging at me, begging me to give him his chance. Then the great block shifted in its bed, tilted and slid crushingly against me. Barely in time I slipped out from under it; then I was leaning over its slimy mass, Smirnoff's torch in my hand, peering into the black cavern beyond. The round beam of the torch wavered across moldering straw -- across dripping, fungus-feathered

walls. It centered on a face, huge-nosed, topped with matted red hair.

It was Donegan!

We fed him while Dunard hacked at the gyves that held him spread-eagled against the wall. As he grew stronger he talked -- answering my questions -- telling of things that grew too horribly clear in the light of past happenings. At last we parted, Dunard and Smirnoff to carry word to the Brotherhood of the Cross -- Donegan and I into the dark dungeons of Nicholas Svadin!

The guard at the cell door died as other guards have died before; we had no choice. I remembered those voices which were only fingers tap-tap-tapping through stone. I knew what those buried men would do if only they could -- and gave them their chance.

We were a little army in ourselves when we charged up the great central staircase of Svadin's castle against the grim line of faithful guards. At the landing they held us -- and outside, rattling in the gardens beyond the great doors, we could hear the gunfire of that last stand of our Brotherhood against ignorance and fear. We thought then that Dunard and Smirnoff had won through, had given their message to those who could light the flame of revolt. We did not know that they were cut down before they could reach our forces. But armed with what we could find or wrest from the men who opposed us, we charged up that broad staircase into the face of their fire, burst over them and beat them down as a peasant flails wheat, turned their machine-gun on their fleeing backs and mowed them down in a long, heaped windrow strewn down the length of the corridor to Svadin's door.

We stood there at the head of the stairs, behind the gun, staring at that door -- half naked, filthy, caked with blood. There was a great, breathless silence broken only by the patter of gunfire in the courtyard outside, muffled by the walls. Then Donegan picked up the gun and stepped over the crumpled body of a guard. His bare feet slapped on the cold stone of the hall and behind him our footsteps echoed, in perfect time, drumming the death-roll of Nicholas Svadin. We came to the door -- and it opened!

Heinrich Sturm stood there. Sturm -- grown bent and little. Sturm with horror in his eyes, with horror twisting his face and blood streaming down his chest from a ripped-out throat. Sturm -- babbling blood-choked German words, tottering, crumpling at our feet, who stood staring over him into the great, dark room beyond, at Svadin, red-mouthed, standing beside the great canopied bed, at the ten foul things that stood behind him!

Donegan's machine-gun sprayed death over the bleeding body of Zoölogist Heinrich Wilhelm Sturm. Soft slugs plowed into the soft body of Nicholas Svadin, into the bodies of the ten things at his feet. He shook at their impact, and the pallid flesh ripped visibly where

they hit, but he only stood and laughed -- laughed as the god of Gold had laughed, in a voice that meant death and doom to the human race -- laughed and came striding at us across the room with his hell-pack trotting at his heels.

There are fears that can surpass all courage. That fear drenched us then. We ran -- Donegan with his gun like a child in his arms, I with old Heinrich Sturm dragging like a wet sack behind me, the others like ragged, screaming ghosts. We stumbled over the windrows of dead in the corridor, down those sweeping stairs into the lower hall, through the open doors into the courtyard. We stood, trapped between death and death.

A hundred men remained of the Brotherhood of the Cross. They were huddled in a knot in the center of the court, surrounded by the host who were faithful to fear, and to Svadin. As we burst through the great doors of the castle, led by the naked, haggard, flaming-haired figure of Jim Donegan, every eye turned to us -- every hand fell momentarily from its work of killing. Then miraculously old Heinrich Sturm was struggling up in my arms, was shouting in German, in his bubbling, blood-choked voice, and in the throng other voices in other languages were taking up his cry, translating it -- sending it winging on:

"He is no god! He is from Hell -- a fiend from Hell! Vampire -- eater of men! He -- and his cursed spawn!"

They knew him, every one. They knew him for Svadin's intimate -- the man who spoke with Svadin's voice and gave him orders to the world. They heard what he said -- and in the doorway they saw Svadin himself.

He was naked, as he had stood when that door swung open and Sturm came stumbling through. He was corpse-white, blotched with the purple-yellow of decay, bloated with the gasses of death. Svadin -- undead -- un-human -- and around his feet, ten gibbering simulacra of himself -- ten pulpy, fish-white monsters of his flesh.

He stood there, spread-legged, above the crowd. His glassy eyes stared down on the bloody, upturned faces, and the stump of his hacked arm pounded on his hairless breast where the line of bullet-marks showed like a purple ribbon. His vast voice thundered down at them, and it was like the howling of a lusty bull:

"I am Nicholas Svadin!"

And in hideous, mocking echo the ten dwarfed horrors piped after him:

"I am Nicholas Svadin!"

In my arms old Heinrich Sturm lay staring at the Thing whose slave he had been, and his old lips whispered five words before his head sagged down in death. Red Jim Donegan heard them and shouted them for the world to hear.

Svadin heard, and if that dead-man's face could show expression, fear sloughed over it, and his thick red lips parted in a grin of terror over yellow fangs.

"Burn him! Fire is clean!"

I caught up the body of Heinrich Sturm and ran with it, out of the path of the mob that surged up the castle steps, Jim Donegan at their head. Svadin's splayed feet pounded across the floor of the great hall, his hell-brood pattering after him.

Then the crowd caught them and I heard the spat of clubbed fists on soft flesh, and a great roaring scream of fury went up over the yammer of the mob.

They tore the little fiends to shreds and still they lived. They bound the Thing that had been Svadin and carried him, battered and twisting, into the courtyard. They built a pyre in the streets of Budapest, and when the flames licked high they cast him in, his hell-spawn with him, and watched with avid eyes as he writhed and crisped. The beast is in every man when hate and fear are roused. Far into the night, when Svadin and his brood were ashes underfoot, the mad crowd surged and fought through the streets, looting, burning, ravening.

When Svadin died, four men had ruled the world. Today four men rule a world that is better because Svadin rose from the dead that day in Budapest, that is free because of his unhuman tyranny. Moorehead, Nasuki, Rasmussen, Corregio. Red Jim Donegan is a hero, and I, and a hundred other living men, but none pays homage to dead old Heinrich Wilhelm Sturm. He was too long identified with Nicholas Svadin for men to love him now.

What we know of Svadin, and of other things, Sturm had learned, little by little, through the years. He told certain things to Donegan, before Svadin grew suspicious and ordered the American's death. It was Heinrich Sturm's mercy that won Donegan a cell instead of a bullet or the knife, or even worse. For somewhere during his association with the decadent dregs of Europe's royal courts the reborn Svadin had acquired, among other things, a taste for blood.

"All I know is what Sturm told me," Donegan says. "The old man was pretty shrewd, and what he didn't know he guessed -- and I reckon he guessed close. It was curiosity that made him stay on with Svadin -- first off, anyway. Afterward he knew too much to get away.

"There must have been spores of life, so Sturm said. There was a Swede by the name of Arrhenius -- back years ago -- who thought that life might travel from planet to planet in spores so small that light could push them through space. He said that spore-dust from ferns and moss and fungus, and things like bacteria that were very small, could pass from world to world that way. And he figured there might be spores of pure life drifting around out there in space between the stars, and that whenever they fell on a planet, life would start there.

"That's what happened to us, according to the old man. There were three spores that fell here, all within a short time of each other. One fell in the sea, and it brought the Sea-Thing to life, made mostly of complex molecules of colloidal water and salts out of the sea-ooze where the spore fell. It could grow by sucking up water, but it needed those salts from decomposed, organic things too. That's why it attacked cities, where there was plenty of food for it.

"The second spore fell on quartz -- maybe in some kind of colloidal jelly such as they find sometimes in hard stuff. There was gold there, and the Thing that came alive was what I saw, and what the Indians thought was one of their old gods come to life again -- the god of gold and crystal. Svadin killed it with some radium compound that he invented.

"The third seed fell on Svadin and brought him to life. He wasn't a man, really, but he had all the semblance of a man. He had the same memories in his brain, and the same traits of character, until other things rooted them out. He came to life -- but to stay alive he had to be different from other men. He had embalming-fluid instead of blood, and wax in his skin, and things like that, and he had to replace them the way we eat food to replace our tissues. When he changed, it was in ways a dead man would change, except that he used his brain better and more logically than any live man ever did. He had to learn how a man would act, and he had some willing enough teachers to show him the rotten along with the good.

"Those other things grew as they fed, and so did Svadin, but he was more complex than they were -- more nearly like men. Where they grew, he reproduced, like the simplest kinds of living things, by budding off duplicates of himself, out of his own flesh. It was like a hydra -- like a vegetable -- like anything but a man. Maybe you noticed, too -- a couple of those things, that grew after he lost his arm in Rio, had only one arm too. They were Svadin, in a way. They called his name when he died, there at the last..."

The sweat is standing out on his weather-beaten forehead as he remembers it. I see the vision that he does -- those ten miniature Svadins growing, budding in their turn, peopling the Earth anew with a race of horrors made in mockery of man. He reaches for the bottle at his elbow:

"We've seen Nature -- the Universe -- spawning," he says. "Maybe it's happened on Earth before; maybe it'll happen again. Probably we and all the other living things on Earth got started that way, millions of years ago. For a while, maybe, there were all kinds of abortive monsters roaming around the world, killing each other off the way Svadin killed the Sea-Thing and the god of Gold. They were new and simple -- they reproduced by dividing, or budding, or crystallizing, and it was hard to kill them ex-

cept with something like fire that would destroy the life-germs in them. After a while, when the seed of life in them would be pretty well diluted, it would be easier. Anyway, that's how I figure it.

"Svadin looked human, at first, but he wasn't -- ever. What he was, no one knows, not even old Sturm. It's pretty hard to imagine what kind of thoughts and feelings a living dead man would have. He had some hang-over memories from the time he was really Svadin; so he started in to fix over the world. Maybe he thought men were his own kind, at first at least, they looked like him. He fixed it, all right -- only, after a while there wasn't anything human left in him, and he began to plan things the way a machine would, to fit him and the race he was spawning. It's no more than we've done since Time began -- killing animals and each other to get what we want, eating away the Earth to get at her metals, and oil, and so on. The god of Gold was kin to the Earth, in a way, and I guess he resented seeing her cut up by a lot of flesh-and-blood animals like us.

"I said he learned some of man's worst vices. Once someone had taught him a thing like that, and he liked it, it became part of the heritage that he passed down to future generations. Somehow he got the taste for flesh -- raw flesh -- and humans were just like any other animal to him. After Sturm stopped being useful to him he attacked the old man too.

"You see, he had a human brain, and he could think like a man, and scheme and sense danger to his plans. Only -- he didn't ever really understand human psychology. He was like an ameba, or a polyp, and I don't guess they have emotions. He didn't understand religion, and the feeling people had that he was a kind of god. He used it -- but when awe turned into hate, and people thought of him as a devil instead of a god, they treated him like one. They burned him the way their ancestors burned witches!"

He tosses down a shot of rye and wipes his lips. "Next time it happens," he says, "I'm going to be drunk. And this time I'll stay drunk!" ■

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Cosmic Anthems: Science

It's no secret that science fiction has infiltrated the music industry over the past couple of decades. I received a letter from one reader who noted that I had made a connection between science fiction and cosmic music. With that in mind, I thought I'd continue with that theme and make a few recommendations of sf-oriented music.

There are plenty of obvious examples of sci-fi music, such as the music from *Star Wars* and Vangelis' "Bladerunner" soundtrack... But I've opted for a few superb, if not more subtle, examples of science fiction-oriented music. Most of these pieces are not available domestically and therefore must be purchased through independent music stores or mail order sources. Some of the best music being produced requires a little digging.

Harnakis' *Numb Eyes*, *The Soul Revelation*

The progressive rock movement of the 1970's produced many songs with science fiction themes. David Bowie's *Space Odyssey*, Yes' *Starship Trooper*, Alan Parson's *I, Robot* are a few popular examples. On the heels of these very famous progressive artists followed a whole backwash of bands that produced some fine music without achieving the same level of fame.

Numb Eyes by Harnakis from

Spain continues a tradition of progressive rock reminiscent of a combination of early Yes, Genesis, and, especially, Camel. Avoiding the pitfall of sounding too much like these bands is what sets Harnakis apart from other Yes and Genesis clones.

Harnakis has several strong aspects that combine in their favor. *Numb Eyes* gives the impression of a real "team effort." The result is some very involved and complex music with no one talent dominating the band. *Numb Eyes* achieves a delicate balance of instrumental and vocal pieces - approximately half-and-half - emphasizing their versatility. One of the most common "ruining factors" for bands are lousy vocals, but along with superb instrumentation, Harnakis is also extremely fortunate to have two proficient vocalists. The album is also beautifully produced - another plus for Harnakis.

"The Wish" sets the tone for the album. A dreamy instrumental beginning with soft synthesizer arpeggios against a backdrop of trickling water, gradually adding slide guitar and percussion while undergoing a number of time-signature changes. "The Wish" segues into "In the Border Line," a classic example of the "progressive rock song." I'm reminded of Genesis in their *Wind* and *Wuthering* days, especially the Steve Hackett-like guitar. The vocals are reminiscent of the vocal

play between Jon Anderson and Christopher Squire of Yes on *Close to the Edge*.

"Abydos" features another dreamy duet between acoustic and electric guitar.

"The Tramp of the Future" is one of the two overtly science fiction pieces of the album. A three-part suite, it is a melancholy tale of humanity in the 22nd century. "He walks alone before desolation/His old boots fight against the sidewalk/While he's thinking that the hope has disappeared/The cybernetics our era has killed..."

The last piece on the album presents a contrasting view of the future. *Numb Eyes* is a plea for a more enlightened tomorrow.



PBC-6006

ANTHONY PHILLIPS
1984



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1984 by Anthony Phillips

Fiction Set To Music

Some music is science fictional in its own right, while other music is inspired by sci-fi literature. *1984* by Anthony Phillips is directly influenced by the Orwellian novel of the same title. The year 1984 has come and gone, but the name still conjures up chilling thoughts of "Big Brother" and the eerie concepts of "the Party" presented in the novel. *1984* is somewhat of a departure for the former Genesis guitarist, whose solo works tend to be acoustic and a little more lighthearted.

The rather sinister cover, a simple black and white image of an open (rat) cage with the artist's name and the title, is somewhat contradictory to the music however. The music is approached in a serious manner, but is not as gloomy as the title and cover indicate. It seems to concentrate more on the humane side of the novel than the dark. Occasionally, the music does slip into almost paranoiacally chilling melodies, for example, towards the climactic end of the album, kettle drums and electronic chants of the words "nineteen eighty-four" dominate the music. These moments are few though. The music always steers back around to the overall positive feel of the album.

All instrumental and electronic, *1984* is not by any means "space music." There is no "spacy" feel to the music. It doesn't float, but moves along at a comfortable

pace. The underlying drum machine rhythm is the thread that ties everything together. *1984* is a dramatic, but upbeat album that keeps the listener's interest with a number of twists and turns...just like the novel.

Hawkwind's *Levitation*

A long and prolific career has established Hawkwind as the masters of science fiction oriented rock. While having many mild hits in Britain, Hawkwind is considered to be more of a "cult band" with a number of avid followers worldwide. Featuring one of Hawkwind's most impressive line-up of musicians including Tim Blake on keyboards and Ginger Baker (Cream) on drums, *Levitation* is a pinnacle in Hawkwind's repertoire.

Hawkwind's aggressive style accentuates the darker side of futuristic life that has become the signature theme of their music. *Levitation's* driving rhythms are laced with dreamy, haunting melodies. There is ongoing play between the hard, psychedelic and the spacy, ethereal aspects of the music. *Levitation* is a musical drama acting out the gamut of Hawkwind's multifaceted musical abilities.

Hawkwind has never made any excuses about their ties to science fiction literature. This becomes apparent from their writing

which contains close ties to the writings of Michael Moorcock. "Who's Gonna Win the War" is a classic science fiction theme about the ensuing tension between opposing forces before nuclear showdown. "Who's Gonna Win the War" segues into a lightning paced instrumental entitled "Space Chase."

Levitation includes seven other faced-paced tracks packed with high-energy futuristic anthems. Hawkwind is not for the listener looking for soothing relaxation in music. (Hawkwind - *Levitation* - Castle Communications - CLACD 129)

Dream Code - *Style Goes Beyond Time*

Science fiction films and literature often have the tendency to portray the future as being a pretty doggone scary place. The future is defined as cold, sterile and smoky. Its colors are grey and black. It is steel and wire. Impersonal and cybernetic. Ridden with war and crime.

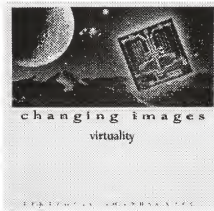
In the most overlooked part of the record bins, the "Collections" bin, I found Dream Code. Dream Code is music with a mission: to rectify the gap between the icy detachment associated with science and technology and the human need for warmth, creativity and individuality.

There is some very definite propaganda at work here. The

sleeve notes state that "IC artists paint mind pictures with the listeners thoughts as they brush while the music plays. Electronic music is not any more cold or frightening, it never was, but is more than ever dreamy and beautiful, giving all of us the chance to be freely creative with the best computer there is: our mind, our brain, ourself...electronic music does show an emotional way to approach, comprehend, integrate and understand the instruments of high technology."

Dream Code brings together a number of well-known artists including Kitaro, Ryuichi Sakamoto and Double Fantasy, each contributing a facet of the human side of electronic music ranging from symphonic to eastern-influenced and incorporating a wide range of emotional feelings.

Dream Code is for those who prefer a relaxing escape from the day-to-day stresses of the techno world and a subtle reminder that technology is man's servant, not it's master.



Changing Images' *Virtuality*

This German gem is sure to delight fans of Tangerine Dream. While incorporating bright, rhythmic German-style synthesizer and sequencer lines, Changing Images avoids the repetitiveness that often intimidates many would-be Tangerine Dream listeners.

Virtuality is a particularly approachable album, especially for those leery of the "space music" genre.

Virtuality integrates the key-

boards of Martin Kornberger and (electric) guitars of Volker Kuhn. The science fiction tone of the album is set in the sleeve notes by the artists personal interpretations of the term "Virtuality."

"Virtuality - signifies the crossing of the borderlines between man, machine, and nature. By means of computer technology it is possible now to scan reality and form virtual new ones - at least in music."

"Virtuality - this expresses in some way a longing for illusionary worlds of beauty and power beyond human restrictions. But the closer one gets to them, the more unreal and empty they seem. At last nothing remains but the loneliness of our inner space."

Changing Images presents a wide range of moods, textures, and flavors brings reality to these definitions. The music takes a journey through an electronic universe exploring bright tempos to gloomy, melancholy power to vast empty expanses of space. Sometimes the sound is earthy, laced with electronic oceans, insects, birds, and jungle rhythms conjuring images of tropical rainforests on distant planets. Changing Images journey continues to "Lilith - the Black Moon," a place of power with a hauntingly dark, mysterious beauty of its own; a gloomy foreboding place with electronic chants and dark harmonies. A lone guitar wails over sequencers and electronic kettle drums.

"Cyberspace" is a cold, digital piece with the feel of a shipboard computer on a lifeless space ship millions of miles in the desolation of space. "Cloudwalk" is a warmer, symphonic piece with broad sweeping waves of synthesizer organs and electronic bells and flutes. "The Moor" returns to the terrestrial plane capturing the drama and isolation of a windswept moor. *Virtuality* ends with the soft yet powerful electronic image of the "Dawn."

Virtuality is an excursion through musical realms of daz-

zling electronic imagery, sure to be a favorite in any electronic music collection. (Changing Images - *Virtuality* - Lektronic Soundscapes LS-92003-CD)

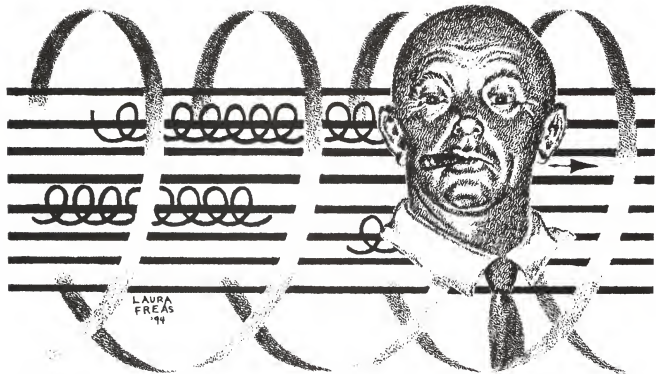
Software's *Electronic Universe Pt. 1*

Electronic Universe is perhaps one of the better-known CDs by Peter Mergener and Michael Weisser, aka Software. Software crawls comfortably into the niche of the space music genre dug by Tangerine Dream in the 1970's. While *Electronic Universe* is a fairly recent composition, it maintains the raw beauty and craftsmanship that predates the pre-programmed synthesizer so blamed for the "sameness" of current synthesizer music.

Electronic Universe is more in-depth than *Virtuality*, including longer songs and heavier reliance on the sequencer. *Electronic Universe*, however, avoids the common pitfall of stagnation or floating without actually going anywhere or doing anything. The music moves fluently from one theme into another, keeping the listener focused. It is neither fast paced, nor meandering, but comfortable and relaxing.

While *Virtuality* seemed to journey back and forth between celestial and terrestrial realms, *Electronic Universe* seems to hover just above the terresphere. The themes, again, are science fiction-oriented. The six pieces are titled "Fluting Electronic Universe," "Surfing Saturn," "Dancing Venus," "Cosmic Calimba," "Add Space-To-Time," and "Psychomellow-Planet," giving an itinerary of what is in store on this cosmic journey.

Science fiction has been an integral part of music. Sometimes influenced by it; sometimes, the music becomes another venue for sci-fi themes. No time for a book? How about getting a sci-fi fix by popping a CD into the stereo. All the drama, suspense and thrill of a good novel can be transferred by skilled musicians with a cosmic tale to tell. ■



A Future Fable For Our Time:

The Paraverse

*A posthumous collaboration between
John Brunner and J*m*s Th*r*b*r*

Professor Hans Anfiet lectured in purely misapplied mathematics at Hilbert College — when he remembered to turn up to class. Despite a reputation for unworldliness he was widely respected, since given the mess the world was in most of his colleagues had concluded that an attitude like his was only sensible.

To his sorrow, he had a disreputable brother named Ed, given to drinking, gambling and sponging off what friends remained to him. It was generally a bad sign when he turned up in his older sibling's life. However, on this latest occasion he seemed to be in a presentable state albeit a subdued mood. The professor granted admission to his office with less reluctance than usual because he had an announcement he was bursting to share with some-

body. He would not have been human had he not offered a frank and literal answer to the question that Ed posed: "Well, what have you been up to lately?"

The reply was tinged with pardonable pride: "I have created the first apparatus guaranteed to displace the user into a paraverse."

"Huh?" said Ed.

As lucidly as he could, the professor explained his theory that all events which can occur do occur, and therefore there are uncountable parallel universes — paraverses for short. He was rewarded by dawning comprehension.

"You mean there are other worlds where — oh, where I didn't drop ten thousand bucks on the geegees yesterday? Ten thousand bucks I don't

have?" Ed was carrying a newspaper folded open at the sports pages. He brandished it with an expression of disgust.

Severely the professor said, "So you've been betting again! After all the times I've lectured you on odds and statistics!"

"Can the sermon," Ed snapped. "I didn't come here hoping for a loan — you've turned me down too often for that. But how about answering my question?"

"Are there universes where you have more sense than to waste money backing horses? Certainly there are!"

Ed rubbed his chin. "This sounds fantastic! You really can move somebody into one of these different worlds?"

Surprised and not unflattered by his brother's unprecedented interest, the professor admitted, "Not a very different world. The earth still goes round the sun, the air is still fit to breathe, in fact even the weather is the same."

"Then how," Ed challenged, "can you be sure it's different?"

"I've proved it mathematically," said the professor in a solemn tone. "You don't have to take my unsupported word. My calculations have undergone peer review and my paper on the subject has been accepted for the next issue of *Quatschgewissenschaftliche Kopfwehberichten*, a German journal that you may not have heard of but more respected than *The Racing Form*. Would you like to see my apparatus?"

"Darn right I would!" was the coarse answer.

"Come with me."

The machine was located in an adjacent laboratory. It wasn't much to look at, consisting mainly of a dentist's chair surrounded by a wire cage connected to the electricity supply, and Ed's initial reaction was scornful. Tossing his newspaper on a nearby bench, he circled the device as though afraid it might bite.

"That's all?" he demanded.

"Well, it's only a pilot model. But it definitely works. As I said, I've proved it."

"But have you actually tried it out?"

"Of course. After tests on animals, naturally. But it would have been dishonourable to let anyone else be the first human subject."

"Hmmm!" said Ed, who was obviously thinking deeply.

"You sound doubtful," observed Professor Anfiet, himself sounding affronted.

"Well, it's kind of a tough idea to wrap your brain around, you know. I guess you wouldn't consider letting me try it, would you?"

"By all means!"

It seemed that was the last answer Ed had been expecting. He blanched.

"Does it hurt?"

"Not in the slightest."

"What do I have to do?"

"Sit down, let me close the cage, and throw that switch." He pointed to a rack of electrical equipment.

"How long does it take?"

"A tiny fraction of a second."

"Well, then...Well, okay!"

Gingerly he lowered himself into the chair. "I wish it didn't look so much like—" he muttered, and broke off.

"I know what you were going to say," the professor stated dryly. "And you're wrong."

He clipped shut the door of the wire cage and retreated to stand by the switch. "Ready?"

"As I'll ever be," Ed wisecracked. His newspaper lay with the racing results displayed; he fixed his eyes on them, and added, "Fire when you see the whites of my eyes!"

The switch clicked. There was a whiff of ozone. The professor moved to unfasten the cage again.

"But—" Ed began slowly, rising to his feet.

"But what?"

"These are the same results!" He snatched up his paper. "All the nags I backed yesterday still lost. Nothing's changed!"

"My dear fellow, if only you understood the mathematics you would not doubt me for a moment. When I closed that switch at least one of the neutrons within the cage emitted an electron and thereby turned into a proton, an event which otherwise would not have happened, thus creating, as I say, a different universe. Of course, the distinctions aren't perceptible at the macroscopic level. My proof, however, is incontrovertible. To use a crude but common metaphor: watertight."

"Screw your proof!" Ed snarled. "I still owe Ozzie Hermann ten thousand bucks and his torpedos are still going to come looking for me! I'll be lucky to escape with my life! You cheated me, you scoundrel!"

And he clamped vice-tight fingers around his brother's throat.

This isn't fair! Professor Anfiet thought with his last vestige of consciousness. *I did so displace Ed to another universe! I'm sure that in the ones where I didn't let him try out my apparatus he must have found completely different grounds for strangling me!*

Moral: Parallel lines stretch away to infinity, but parallel worlds can't outreach asininity. ■



THE by Basil Wells LAWS OF JUSS

art by George Barr

"So it is awake you are, Earthman Brand," the wispy, gray-bearded man across the great table said to him.

There was an unwonted waxy pallor to the sun-darkened flesh of the old man. In a matter of days he had aged as many years. His half-hidden lips were shrunken and bluish. His bent blue-veined hands trembled constantly.

Close to him on the table lay the threat of a magazine-fed crossbow. His hands were never far from it. Despite the high state of technology and education the men and women of Juss rarely carried weapons other than crossbows or keen sheathed knives when on the mainland.

Only among the thousands of untamed islands of the Farlands did the men and women of Juss reluctantly turn to defensive weapons introduced by the traders of Twenty Planets over the past century. Juss had developed many customs and traditions on its own during the preceding thousand years of isolation from the

other planets that had first colonized her.

Grayson Brand strained briefly against the stout belt that tethered him to a massive black chair. He was naked to the waist, wide bandages swathing his broad hair-furred chest, and both arms immobilized by banded and splinted sleeves reaching above his elbows.

He tried to speak but only a faint rattling sound and a choking sensation resulted.

The after-effects of the drug old Dudley Feeber must have given him, doubtless while they sat drinking thick Jussan beer and yarning about their experiences together in the years spent in the Farlands, were slowly dissipating.

The gaps in his vision and hearing were lessening.

"You wonder why, I take it," Feeber rubbed thoughtfully at his outside skewed nose, "Just why I, with a dozen ships and wealth enough for a hundred men, should seize you by treachery in such a manner."

Brand croaked out a snuffling sound.

"I have informed the Serene Person, the Lady Lynne Holmes," the undertones of his voice menacing and ugly in Brand's ears, "that you are injured. That both your arms and several ribs were broken in a fall from a mast aboard my yacht yesterday."

Brand lurched against his bonds, fighting the paralysis that seemed to be afflicting his throat muscles so he could shout out his hatred.

Even as he struggled his brain was trying to understand the inexplicable change in the older man. Feeber had been his early mentor and close friend since his arrival on Juss.

Dudley Feeber had met, and welcomed him, at the spaceport of Awaz five years earlier. They had gone fishing and hunting together and when his position with the Port Authority was terminated six months later Feeber had loaned him the funds to purchase his first trading schooner.

They had sailed together through all the savage beauty of the Farland Islands, fought the piratical dwarfish aboriginal natives, and traded for the precious green pearls, the rarest of all jewels, with the divers of Ridx and Lanak.

"I sent the word secretly of course, Grayson. She had not yet informed her husband that she is about to choose you as her latest to succeed him. I know that she has so chosen, even if you may be ignorant of her designs. You are to be her consort -- for the time -- her sixth husband in actuality, because she admires your strength, your handsomeness, and your off-world virility."

Brand threw himself against his bonds. Now that he was fully aware he knew that his mouth was corked with a ball or globular gag secured by a tight bandage around his skull. He could not understand why Feeber had not told him all this and allowed him to escape to the Farlands or take a spaceship offplanet. *He must be mad.*

He had met the fabled Lady Lynne Holmes only twice at gatherings in Awaz and not been impressed. That she was immensely wealthy and politically powerful he knew, but she was too old and rattled to even tempt him to wish to be joined with her.

Feeber leaned closer, his dark eyes saddened. "You say in your mind that there is no divorce on Juss. It is true. Nor is there any mating outside marriage for either the man or the woman. Yet the Lady Lynne Holmes has taken five husbands. You would have been the sixth. That I decided to prevent, my friend.

"The laws of Juss are yet more strict than the laws of your ancient Moses, he of the stone tablets and the magic staff. That only death may dissolve a mating is enforced. Yet that is what must not happen here. Nor must you be sacrificed. I have sealed your mouth and bound you so to ensure your silence and, yes, to save your life."

The old man's voice was faltering and his face was sweating. He took a drink from a glass

of dark amber wine.

The Earthman's blood surged noisily in his ears. His arms ached and the blockage of his tongue and teeth was intolerable. Would the old man, his former friend and sponsor, ever free him?

After a pause Feeber put down the emptied glass and coughed. He looked better and Brand hoped that this strange charade was ending.

"For accidental or purposeful injury," Feeber began again, "there must be payment in kind. The perpetrator must yield limbs or organs to replace those damaged or destroyed. The well-to-do are permitted to purchase, if available, replacements from the hospital. For the poor this is impossible. They must use prosthetic devices, or die if they lose organs.

"All this I think you have learned already. Also, that in the Farlands it very definitely is not so. But the natives there are not humanoids as are we."

Brand grimaced as best he could. What was this lecture leading to? After five years here on Juss, he realized, he did not know what strange behavioral code had evolved in the thousand years of isolation.

"Now to the meat of the matter, Gray. Death by accident or intent requires that the living person responsible for the death must yield up his body to be blanked, memories wiped clean, and the memora discs of the dead person are used to fill again the memory cells of the 'rased brain.

"Graagh," was Brand's only comment.

"The body is then altered and ultimately resembles as closely as possible, that of the deceased original. Sometimes very closely."

Brand struggled again to move. Was that all, he wondered?

But Feeber was not finished it now appeared.

"So what has that to do with you, eh? Soon the Noble Lady, that Serene Personage, that ravishingly beautiful wife of five husbands -- and murderer of four of them -- will arrive to visit you."

Brand struggled half-heartedly to free himself. He writhed in the chair to which he was belted, his anger at the older man hot.

"You have seen her present husband. Perhaps thirty you think? Officially he is sixty-eight according to the laws of Juss. He is her one and only husband. Even his name is that of the first husband, Aaron Holmes. Legally she cannot be named a widow, as are less wealthy and powerful women. She uses our laws for her own purposes. Shamefully!"

Dudley Feeber's eyes closed briefly. They were misted with tears when he opened them again.

"The body that Aaron Holmes now pos-

esses was that of my only heir, my grandson. Like the others before, she showered him with attention and gifts and awards until he became her lover. As the code allows and even directs, her husband demanded a duel with traditional daggers and of course, died of his wounds as she made certain.

"That will happen to you, my friend. She has announced her intentions to some of her associates. I was so informed. She will have you by whatever means needed. Unless she is destroyed."

Brand wanted to cry out. To protest. To promise that he would leave Juss forever. Yet his first thoughts of disbelief were gone. There was something sinister and unnatural about the attentions Lady Lynne had suddenly begun showering upon him.

A discreet tapping at the cabin's door sounded.

"Enter," Feeber said tonelessly.

Plainly clothed in a coarse green robe, such as the poorer people wore in the city of Awaz, with her fair hair smoothed flat and bound with a greenish triangle of beaded netting, was the woman who entered. Despite the robe the buxom beauties of her full breasts and rounded hips were inadequately concealed. The plain brown mask wedded so cleverly to her features, however, was an effective disguise.

Two poorly clad servitors entered behind her. First was Graf Mabel, a hefty rawboned giantess of a woman, and after her a muscular, stub-bodied, moronic lump of a man called Hari. Hari's red, scarred, hairy face wore an eternal toothy grin.

The mask came off quickly and smoothly. Lady Lynne gave it to the big woman and in turn Graf Mabel supplied her with soft white tissues for her face.

Hari closed the cabin door and shot the bolt behind them.

Lady Lynne turned her fair-skinned and lovely face toward the heavy black chair where Grayson Brand was seated.

"This is so sad, so needless," she exclaimed as she came closer and gently touched his forehead. "How badly were you injured?"

Behind the frozen mask of his bandaged face he was experiencing a bewildering flood of emotions. A wave of revulsion grew.

He was seeing her as she really was: a product of endless hours of skilled reconstruction, constant maintenance, and the magic of cosmetics. Her large impossibly blue eyes revealed the weariness and eternal boredom of a jaded aging woman's quest for pleasure.

For the first time she seemed to notice the shrunken old man seated across the massive black table.

"It is you who are responsible for this poor boy's disaster," she accused. "How did it hap-

pen? Why can he not speak? He should be under medical care, Feeber. He needs nurses, and supervision. I will take him with me. Care for him."

Her hand caressed his forehead and she smiled so sweetly down at him. "I will see that you grow well swiftly," she whispered.

Feeber smiled. It was not a pleasant smile. He had flawless gleaming white teeth, unusual in a Jussan of his advanced years. For a long moment he said nothing, but his hands moved purposefully under the table.

"Gray will recover quickly, and without your help," he said softly, and then more loudly, "but you will not."

Lady Lynne had not controlled a financial empire that webbed the four hundred thousand square miles of the planet's largest continent for many years without acquiring an ability for split-second decisions. She sensed treachery and reacted swiftly.

"Cover him, Hari!" she ordered, and in the same instant she put the imposing bulk of Graf Mabel between them.

The crossbow emerged and spat a bolt audibly at Hari. The hairy lump of a man's eternal grin froze on his face as the tiny quarrel pierced his forearm and he fell forward upon his face.

Brand decided that there must have been poison on the tip of the tiny missile. It was too small to have immobilized his body otherwise.

"Step aside, large one," Feeber ordered Graf Mabel.

"Why do you wish to kill me?" demanded Lady Lynne as she clung to her living wall for safety.

"Can you ask that? You who took my only grandson. You who now covet the body of my friend, Brand. You have lived too long, woman. It is past time that you be destroyed."

"But you cannot destroy me, Dudley Feeber." Her mocking laugh was tension-filled and mirthless. "They will take your body and change it. In it I will live on. You cannot win."

"And if I destroy this body? If I die? What then? Do not waste your breath. Step out and face your death."

Brand wanted to shout out to them all that he was leaving Awaz and the watery planet of Juss forever. There was no reason to kill her. She would never be able to take him once he was in space.

Graf Mabel swung her great body slowly around exposing the body of her mistress. Lady Lynne fought to find new shelter as she turned but Graf Mabel held her as she was.

"No! Destroy him! A fortune for you Graf Mabel. Anything you ask." Her voice was shrill, terrified and harsh.

The big woman's face was expressionless and she did not respond. Lady Lynne clawed one arm free and plunged it deep into the inner sheathings to the pocket between her breasts.

She was spitting and snarling at Graf Mabel and all of them like some great jungle cat.

Her hand emerged. There was a tiny jeweled needler in her grip. As it came level she started firing in the direction of the crossbow-armed old man.

The gleaming surface of the *sopharwood* table splintered as an explosive needle struck it. Gaps opened in the bulkheads and the deck shed more splinters. The explosive needles finally found their target. The body of Dudley Feeber, who had risen and stood mockingly a perfect target, suddenly jolted and seemed to fly apart as several of the tiny missiles struck home.

Brand had noticed that his friend did not attempt to return Lady Lynne's fire with his small crossbow. Instead he had kept it pointed downward toward the table's surface. He realized that the wily old man had baited and provoked her angry assault. By so doing he had negated her chance to survive in his, or any other person's body. Her personal memories in the government's file of memora disc and tapes, would be on file but never be used for another human being's blanked brain.

Dudley Feeber had destroyed her and gained tardy justice for his grandson's mental death. With only a few hours left to live Feeber would now have his stored memories transplanted into Lady Lynne's transformed male body. He would live again!

Graf Mabel twisted the deadly little weapon out of her grasp. She dragged her mistress, fighting every step, to the mune screen and built the number pattern on the ivory studs there.

"Not the tectors, Graf!" her voice was hoarse and unrecognizable. "Half my wealth. An island, two or three, all you own. Anything you want!"

Graf Mabel grunted. "I know you too well to trust you. I have funds put away -- more than enough. You were a good teacher." A grim smile touched the broad leathery face.

"Enjoy the thought of how this body you have loved so much will be changed. That you will become a graying wrinkled man called Dudley Feeber. Cherish that picture in the time you have left."

A uniformed man's face glowered on the mune screen. "Tector department," he said, scowling.

"I wish to report a death, officer, an unlawful death," said Graf Mabel, "caused by the reckless use of a needler by this woman beside me."

While Brand awaited release from his bonds he wondered what the future held. At least a year would pass before Feeber, in his new healthier body, would be released. Out of the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of Hari arising from the floor where the poisoned dart had dropped him. Graf Mabel kept her grip on Lady Lynne and smiled encouragingly at him while they awaited the tector squad's arrival. ■

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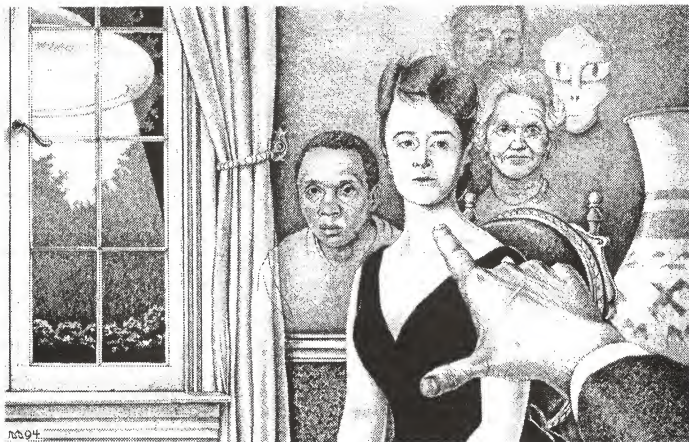
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Hypnosis

UFO Abductions, Past Life Regression, and False Abuse Allegations...

and Society's Plague of Forgotten Horrors

by Peter Huston

According to some experts, up to 3.7 million adults in the United States have been abducted by space aliens. Others claim we have all lived many times before, and in some cases suffer from vague anxieties or even acute phobias caused by traumas experienced during these long-forgotten lifetimes. Some therapists have found that 70 to 80% of their patients ultimately come to realize that their problems are caused by repressed traumatic abuse.

If the statistics seem a little high to you, you're not alone. But don't worry. These same experts have a simple answer: These tragedies, they say, occur all the time, but the people involved for-

got. The evidence seems to be clear. According to these people we live in not only a very sick society, but also a very forgetful one. And they, the experts assert, should know. After all they helped us to remember our experiences as reincarnated, sexually abused, survivors of assaults by space aliens...by using hypnosis to jog our tricky memory.

Hypnosis is a curious thing, and perceptions of its uses and capabilities are full of myths and misunderstandings. As we all know, when people are hypnotized they behave quite strangely. Generally, the strange behavior of hypnotized people follows a manner designed to please their hypnotist. What may be equally amazing is

that there is little to no consensus as to why this happens.

Some claim that hypnosis is a special and quite mysterious state of the human mind, and hence poorly understood. Others claim, perhaps more amazingly, that

**3.7 million adults
in the United States
have been abducted
by space aliens**

hypnosis is just an extension of ordinary, already understood behaviors taken to a strange extreme. Dr. Robert A. Baker, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Kentucky, is one of the leading critics of the "special state"

art by Keith Minnion

theories. In his book, *They Call It Hypnosis*, he has levied many charges against the claims for hypnosis being a unique and special state of mind. In fact, states Baker, most investigators and researchers agree that ninety to ninety-five percent or more of the behaviors exhibited by the typical hypnotized subject can be accounted for adequately with social-psychological concepts. With this kept in mind, many feel that proposing a special state behind hypnotic behavior is not only unnecessary, but makes hypnotic theory unnecessarily complex and obtuse.

They feel that its strange behaviors come primarily from the twin factors of belief and roleplaying. In other words someone who truly believes that they are hypnotized behaves the way they believe hypnotized people behave. They act out a role. To support this view they point out that people who are hypnotized will not do things that they normally have strong inhibitions against, such as robbery and murder to take two extreme examples. For instance, the CIA among others has experimented to see if hypnosis would work as a mind-control technique and found it sorely lacking.

As if to emphasize this point of view, the amazing Kreskin, a "mental" or a stage performer specializing in feats dealing with the mind and artificial psychic effects, routinely asks a hypnotized audience member to stab him with a knife. So far he remains uncut. To further stress this point, Kreskin has a standing offer of \$100,000 to anyone who can clearly demonstrate that hypnosis qualifies as a unique mental state or "trance." So far, he has no takers.

Nevertheless, the idea of a special state remains in wide circulation. According to Dr. William C. Coe, a professor of psychology at California State University at Fresno, at least one reason for the popularity of the special state the-

ory lies in the politics and self-image of many hypnotists. The temptation lies as follows, if hypnosis is seen as something really special, mysterious, exciting, and unique, then the hypnotherapists who employ it to manipulate and curb the undesirable behaviors of their fellow man, can easily see themselves as special, mysterious, exciting, and unique. Few can resist the appeal of such a self-image, and the use of the concept appears to be here to stay for at least some time. Coe believes that those who conduct experimental research into hypnosis, by contrast, are much less likely to cling to notions of a special state.

A person can be hypnotized through many different means. One of these is the traditional "hypnotic induction" involving swaying crystals or watches and a mysterious Svengali chanting "You

the CIA experimented to see if hypnosis would work as a mind-control technique

are getting sleepy," but this is only one method. As Baker has written, "Nearly all experienced hypnotherapists know that the type of induction procedure used is not half as important as the mental set of the subject when he comes to a hypnotic session." In fact, one hypnotist, C. Scott Moss, has gone so far as to "induct a state of hypnosis" on occasion by simply asking volunteers from his audience to sit in a chair and then ask them to "go into a state of hypnosis." He will then resume his lecture, and when desired, will approach the subject to generally find them just as "hypnotized" as if he had used a more formal method.

Of course, the issue at hand is not what causes hypnosis, but the more practical matter of whether it can be used to assist memory. The studies would indicate that the answer is no. To a slight ex-

tent, being hypnotized may serve as a relaxant and therefore improve the recall of a particularly nervous or agitated person. This slight advantage however is overshadowed by a very real risk of *confabulation*. Confabulation is a somewhat technical term to describe what happens when a person invents false memories without realizing it.

A hypnotized subject wishes to conform to the desires of the hypnotist. Like a slow child called upon in school, if he does not recall the correct answer, then there is a strong tendency to create one that seems to fit. This behavior is done unconsciously and without the hypnotic subject being aware that he is being anything less than truthful. Just as we normally do not know where our memories, daydreams, and fantasies come from, while hypnotized it can be-

come even more difficult to distinguish. If one stops to think about it, then it becomes quite clear how difficult it would be to distinguish something one has never done from something one has done but cannot remember. If a mental image of yourself riding a horse comes to mind, is it the start of a hazy recollection of a forgotten memory or the beginnings of a new daydream? For example, in a 1980 Arizona murder case, a witness, the victim's wife, was unable to recall the details of the license plate of the killer's car. An attempt was made to enhance her memory through hypnosis and the woman soon provided a complete set of numbers and letters for the forgotten plate. Unfortunately, it soon became obvious that the plates described did not fit the description of any plates issued in the United States. This is a classic, but typical, case of confabulation under hypnosis.

In 1985, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a report designed to examine the issue. Entitled "Scientific Status of Refreshing Recollection by the Use of Hypnosis," it con-

cluded that the danger of confabulation was just too great. Although the subjects would provide answers to the questions asked, they would often create false answers without even realizing it. The JAMA report did state that perhaps hypnotic recollection might be useful in a situation where facts could be carefully checked. However if one were unable to check the statements provided, then false information would negate the usefulness of the procedure. Obviously, hypnosis is not a valuable memory aid for courtroom or therapeutic use.

It should not be particularly surprising to learn that confabulation has been a problem with past life regression attempts as well. Many who believe in reincarnation feel that memories of these past lives are buried somewhere deep inside of us. There they lie, forgotten, and untapped. The thought of recovering such memories is of course quite exciting and those who believe in reincarnation find it tempting to try. Although there are many methods of attempting this (none are universally proven to be successful), hypnosis remains one of the most popular.

The first case to popularize this practice was in the early 1950s. An amateur hypnotist tried it on his neighbor. She took on the personality of an Irish woman of the early nineteenth century. When a bestseller entitled *The Search for Bridey Murphy* (named after the Irish persona which the hypnotic subject took on) described the experience, it sparked off a wave of hypnotic regressions and a passion for hypnotherapy. The fact that skeptics could point out numerous flaws in Murphy's descriptions of nineteenth century Ireland, and that the woman in question spoke curiously like a fictional Irish character she'd once portrayed in a play, hardly caused a ripple in the excitement.

The practice of using hypnosis to attempt regression to past lives

continued. As always, scientists and researchers got involved to see what they could learn. Unfortunately for believers, the results have not confirmed these to be true memories of past lives.

For instance, in one study, Jonathan Venn, a psychotherapist trained in hypnosis, "regressed" a patient suffering from psychosomatic chest pains. The patient came to describe a rather emotional life in France as a World War I fighter pilot. Venn felt that the experience, which was repeated many times, was quite therapeutic. It enabled the patient to experience the emotional release necessary to relieve his symptoms. Curiously, Venn began checking and found that out of 30 statements made relating to historical detail, 16 were correct and 14 false. Seventeen additional items were checked through

a 22-year-old Canadian woman was describing "her life" as a Japanese fighter pilot of W.W. II

hard-to-reach sources, such as the French birth register and the military service records of the time. All of these turned out to be false or showed no record when one should have been easily available.

Despite occasional claims to the contrary, it is not at all unusual for hypnotic subjects to make gross errors in historical fact while attempting to relive past lives. In another example, also curiously involving a fighter pilot (not a universal trend by any means), a 22-year-old Canadian woman was describing "her life" as a Japanese fighter pilot of World War II. Despite many graphic and vivid descriptions of events, upon questioning her in this persona, she was unable to name the emperor of Japan at the time or state the correct year when the Second World War broke out! Serious gaps for a World War II veteran,

needless to say.

Others have approached the issue from different angles. Sarah Thomason, a linguistics professor at the University of Pittsburgh, became interested in whether regressed subjects could actually speak previously unlearned languages. In most cases the subjects were not in fact speaking anything more than a jumbled up smattering of the language. When the language could be spoken well, the subjects could explain how they learned the language by normal means.

Believers in reincarnation often claim it is impossible to create entire historical worlds out of one's imagination, but science fiction fans, of all people, can easily refute this argument. And, just in case you're wondering, there have been attempts to "progress" people to their "future lives." The

results range from the mundane and boring to the curiously intriguing, but nevertheless little consistency emerges. It soon becomes obvious that what we are seeing is not the future, but an equally bizarre twist on the capabilities of the human imagination.

Hypnotic regression, it would seem, does not provide convincing evidence for reincarnation, but it does in fact provide us with further proof of confabulation and the way in which hypnotized subjects confuse fact with fiction.

We encounter a similar situation when we approach the issue of U.F.O. abductions. Believers in U.F.O.s describe a fairly similar abduction scenario. A victim is approached, often while sleeping, by aliens. These aliens who tend to be short and grey, then take their captive human on board their ship and use them for experiments. Often these experiments have sexual overtones. The aliens then erase the memory of the experience from their victim's mind and release him or her. The victim occasionally feels vague anxieties, but has no memory of these experi-

periences. No memory, that is, until a clever U.F.O. buff uses hypnosis to "recover" the horrifying details of the experience.

The implications should be obvious. How does one differentiate between "real" memories of a U.F.O. abduction and those that were accidentally created? The answer, simply, is that you can't with any reliability. Critics further point out that any uniformity in the alien abduction "memories" recovered, may lie more in the fact that the same small cadre of hypnotists and U.F.O. buffs were working in unison over a period of time, all expecting to find the same thing. Sub-conscious cueing of the subject could easily result in near-identical "memories." And if you accidentally convince someone that they have been kidnapped by space aliens, when no such thing happened, then you

fringes of our society. Perhaps an even more frightening aspect of "recovered memories" lies in false allegations of child abuse and sexual molestation. These tragedies are particularly upsetting, because when they do occur they are real and disturbing. Few of us can remain clear-headed even at the mention of someone abusing a pre-schooler in a manner that will scar them for life. And this is as it should be. The problem occurs, however, when persons, for one reason or another, visit a therapist who "recovers" memories of an abusive situation that never in fact occurred.

The patient becomes convinced that they were the victim of a crime that never happened. They often accuse a family member or other innocent person of perpetrating an unspeakable act. Adult children become unnecessarily estranged from their parents over an act that never occurred. And all through the actions of an irresponsible therapist. Thus, through a mistaken idea of how hypnosis and human memory work, we are soon faced with a double tragedy.

A peculiar sub-branch of such tales lies in the reports of "Satanic Ritual Abuse." Such persons claim to have suffered from a series of repeated abuse at the hands of a Satanic cult. Not only do such stories tend to be lacking in corroborating evidence, but generally speaking, the groups described are considered to be quite unlikely, if not impossible, from an anthropological and sociological point of view.

Ultimately, it seems some mysteries remain mysteries. Others fall apart. Although there may be reincarnation, it seems ultimately that belief or disbelief in its existence will remain a matter of religious-type faith. Although space aliens could, I suppose, conceivably be kidnapping people (although I know of no evidence that they are), hypnosis will

not help us detect it. And as for child abuse in all its horrible manifestations, we will need a variety of tools to detect and prevent it. Nevertheless, hypnotic regression does not seem to be among them.

Hypnosis is many things. It is not, however, a time machine. Nor is it a lie detector. And sadly, it cannot be used to recover lost memories. As research continues we find ourselves faced with many interesting questions. Why are people hypnotizable? The role of hypnosis in pain control still remains poorly understood. Does this indicate some still-un tapped human potentials? Why do we enter a state where we wish to please someone we barely know? Is it a remnant of our days as prehistoric herds of hunter-gatherers? If we can accidentally implant false memories of unpleasant happenings, could we intentionally implant memories of happy things? Could this make us a mentally and emotionally happier society? Or would it just make us a society of brainwashed zombies? Would we become like the character in the motion picture *Total Recall*, who unable to afford a genuine luxury vacation, purchases false memories of having had one?

The threats and promises of false memories are intriguing. At the present time, however, what we need is a greater awareness of how they occur or we will find ourselves caught up in their fantasies.

For further information:

The following are addresses of non-profit organizations that deal with the above issues and distribute further information about them.

The False Memory Syndrome Foundation, 3508 Market Street, Suite 128, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3311.

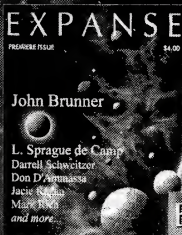
Committee for the Scientific Exploration of Claims of the Paranormal (C.S.I.C.O.P.), P. O. Box 229, Buffalo, NY 14215. ■

Such persons claim to have suffered from... repeated abuse at the hands of a Satanic cult

have implanted a delusional idea among that person's mental processes. In effect you are playing quite a dangerous game with their mental health. The situation has grown acute enough that U.F.O. abductionists are using hypnosis less and less these days, preferring to use different means to "recover" memories. They often uncover "memories" of the same alien kidnapping scenario and claim this as proof. This completely ignores that the "new abductees" are generally copying the scenarios created by the "old abductees." If they were not already familiar with such scenarios, and felt themselves possible abduction victims, then they would never contact the U.F.O. abduction buffs in the first place.

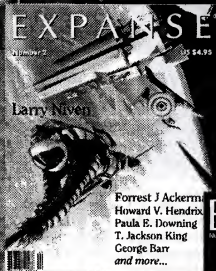
U.F.O. abductions and reincarnation research remains, for better or worse, firmly planted in the

From deep space to your door, but hurry!



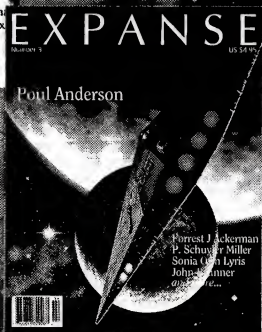
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David J. Adams writes: "My daughter Rachel is two years old now, and a lot of fun..." She's not his only baby though, "I've finished another novel, and I hope to submit it to my agent in the next few weeks." Newborns, both human and literary, may be fun but they are also a lot of work, so he'll be "taking a break from novels and doing some shorts for a while."

"The Green" came to us this issue from **Sonia Orin Lyris**. She's had stories published in *Asimov's SF magazine*, *Pulphouse*, and *Infinite Loop: Software Developer's Own Anthology of Science Fiction* (Miller Freeman). Sonia is a graduate of Clarion West, 1992.



Adam Corbin Fusco describes some of the considerations in writing his latest tale: "Randolph has to make a choice as to whether he still believes in fields or not, and perhaps I should reveal the consequences of that decision."

"Perhaps he hears a piece of the wall tearing from its neighbor. That would create a twist to refute the 'smoke and mirrors' aspect, or at the least assert that it was Randolph's *belief* that counted, whether it was founded in science or not, and whether others believed in it or not. Taken further, perhaps the walls come tumbling down around him, and he achieves his freedom when they crush him."

Peter Huston is, much to his own surprise, a writer whose works tend to explain scientific ideas and correct popular misconceptions about the world we live in. "What really turned me on to the wonder of science," he writes "was when I realized that science and the scientific method are really nothing more than a systematic quest to discover who we are, what our place in the universe is, and exactly what the reality around us consists of." Mr. Huston lived in Asia for several years, and his special interests include Asian cultures, world history and anthropology, religion and mystical experiences, investigating paranormal claims, and the brain sciences. He resides in an apartment full of Chinese religious paraphernalia, Godzilla toys, books, and exotic cooking ingredients. His work has appeared in magazines such as *The Skeptical Inquirer* and *The Skeptic*. And he is currently at work on a book length piece entitled *Beyond Chinese Mysticism* which will deal with the theory and practices of a variety of traditional Chinese arts and sciences.

"Agent Orange" episodes have appeared in the UK's *ProtoStellar* to popular acclaim. "Mary C." is another in the series of alternative-world adventures by England's own **Stephen Hunt**.

He's winner of the 1992 Protostellar Award and has a new book coming out titled *For The Crown & The Dragon* (due in the UK late '94 in mass paperback format under the new Green Nebula imprint). "I also understand there will be a US auction for North American rights... I know some American editors are now looking at the book - but there's no definite news yet of a simultaneous US release. The publishers are expecting it to be quite a big success in Britain."

"Nearly all of my current work is in horror and dark suspense, so it was a real treat to be able to do some SF hardware and alien critters," **Keith Minnion** writes about his work for this issue's "The Second Experiment."

"My first thought was to do a Victorian interior in the style of Edward Gorey, but then someone told me that Phil Parks just did that in the new *Weird Tales*. So then I thought I'd retain my realistic style, with a point of view over the hypnotist's shoulder to the young woman, near full-face, eyes glazed. Behind her is the motley crew...and beyond everyone is a large multi-paned window, dark outside, with a UFO hovering over the lawn. Lots of William Morris wallpaper, drapes and hangings, gilt frames and floor vases."

"I just recently attended the Arisia '94 convention in Boston," writes illustrator **Bob E. Hobbs**. "It was the first science fiction art show and convention I ever personally attended...I usually just mail my art in for the convention art shows. It was great! I met Bob Eggleton again (we met for the first time in Washington DC at the L. Ron Hubbard Awards) and hung my own work in the same booth next to Jael. Then to top it off, I got a chance to chat with Michael Whelan about art."



He reports "more offers from magazines and small press publications" and adds "I must plug a comic book called *Creature of the Night* which is written by Chris Terry, illustrated by myself and inked and lettered by Mike Hegg. Issue #1 received critical acclaim...when it was released in 1992. Issue #2 is about to be released and if anyone wants a copy they should send \$1.50 to Mini Moon Comics, P.O. Box 647, Westfield, IN 46074. End of plug."



Laura Brodian, Ph.D. (aka Laura Freas) began her professional career as Interim Director of the Indiana Arts Commission; later as engineer, host, and producer of classical music radio programs at WFIU-FM, Bloomington, Indiana. She moved to KOED-FM in San Francisco, then on to KUSC-FM in Los Angeles where she hosted the nationally syndicated classical music program *Music Through the Night* for the American Public Radio Network. Currently she announces the in-flight classical music programs for Delta Airlines.

An illustrator in her own right, Laura runs Kelly Freas Studios, where she is in charge of marketing, scheduling, merchandising, contracts, finance, and publicity. Her first nationally published illustrations appeared in *Weird Tales*, *Analog*, *MZB's Fantasy Magazine* and in special editions for the Easton Press. A co-recipient of ASFA's Chesley Award in 1990, she has since been nominated again three times. She is currently working on a cover for *New Eves*, a SF anthology for Waldenbooks.

Basil Wells has had a long history in science fiction. He's sold stories to *IF*, edited by Fred Pohl. "In the 1940s I sold eleven yarns to *Planet Stories*, a dozen to *Fantasy Book*, and had two hardcover collections of 15 stories each from FPCI: *Planets of Adventure '49* and *Doorways to Space* in 1951..."

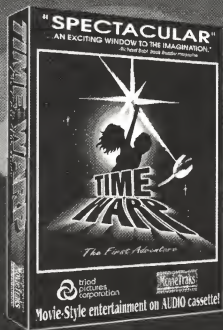
"Thereafter, in a shrinking market I sold *IF* eleven more (8 published before it folded) and a few others to new mags edited by Don Wollheim and Santesson among others. Finally over several years I sold seven offbeat tales... The writing of over 300 weekly columns for the hometown newspaper, after retirement, helped fill the writing gap a bit. And about three years ago I bought two electronic typers and tried to crash the much tougher markets of today. The hope for truly entertaining stories today seems to be supplied by the small press." ■

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